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SPEECH
ON
INDIAN AFFAIRS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,

ON THE
24TH JANUARY, 1866.

BY
ROBERT KNIGHT.
("TIMES OF INDIA.")

LONDON :
WILLIAM JOHN JOHNSON, 121, FLEET STREET.

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P R E F A C E.

SIR CHARLES TREVELYAN's device of Export Duties, to meet the deficit which the Budget Estimates professed to show in the Indian balance-sheet for 1865-6, drew forth from the press of this country a series of comments upon our finances, marked by so painful an absence of exact, or comprehensive, acquaintance with our condition, that I looked round me to see to whom I might address myself with a reasonable hope of securing a hearing upon the question. The *Times* had refused to publish a letter which I had sent to it upon the subject—a letter which I venture to think it ought to have welcomed to its columns, as the contribution of a writer who had very closely studied Indian finance upon the spot. In despair of awakening public attention in this way to considerations which are completely overlooked in this country, I determined to address myself to “the Manchester Party,” in the hope that it might be induced to look carefully and comprehensively into our finances. I addressed myself to them, because, after all, they seem to be the only body of men in England who are willing to make any effort to grasp the facts of our condition. We have

no right, I submit, to inspect too narrowly the motives of Manchester in this matter; and it is hardly decent on the part of gentlemen who refuse to take any interest in Indian affairs themselves, to carp or sneer at those who do.

In pursuance of this resolution, I sought and obtained in June last an interview, in London, with Mr. Bazley, and other members of the House, in the presence of Mr. Henry Ashworth, the respected leader of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce; and I think I may venture to say that at the close of a long conversation with these gentlemen, I left them impressed with the necessity of bringing the whole subject of Indian finance under exact parliamentary inquiry.

The session was then too far advanced to admit of anything being done before the dissolution of the House, but Mr. Ashworth did not forget the pledge he gave me, that Manchester should take up the subject. Accordingly, a few weeks ago, I was invited to attend a conference of its Chamber to discuss the following subjects:—

1. The impolicy of levying Duties on Cotton Goods and Yarns imported into India.
2. The impolicy of Export Duties, as shown in the case of Saltpetre.
3. The advantages likely to attend the Sale of Waste Lands of India in fee-simple.
4. The Perpetual Settlement of the Land-tax.
5. The enactment of a Law providing for the registration and enforcement of Contracts, and the establishment of Small Cause Courts, at convenient distances throughout the country, invested with Summary Jurisdiction.

6. The more active prosecution of Public Works, especially as regards Roads and Irrigation.

The Conference took place on the 24th ultimo, when the Chamber was addressed by Mr. Dickenson (of the Indian Reform Society), Mr. Walter Cassels (late of the Bombay Legislative Council), Mr. Danby Seymour, Lord William Hay, Sir Arthur Cotton, and myself. As I followed these gentlemen, at the close of a long sitting, and spoke at considerable length, the reporters abandoned the attempt to do more than note what seemed to them to be the main propositions of my address. It has been represented to me, however, that it is of some importance that what I said on the occasion should be more widely known; and in reproducing from my notes the considerations I laid before the Conference, I have endeavoured to state exactly what I wished to have said upon each subject, rather than what I may have said. I have also increased the speech by embodying in it the substance of certain remarks which I made in conversation subsequently with some of the leading members of the Chamber, as I am anxious that the subjects dealt with may be fully understood.

We are carrying through in India at this moment a fiscal revolution of fatal import to the country, upon the strength of a vague general impression that we are doing a wise thing; an impression so erroneous that the least *exact* inquiry is sufficient to dissipate it. A Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenue throughout the whole of the North West

Provinces of India, has been proclaimed within the last eighteen months, while the Government of the country does not possess as much exact information, as to the pressure of the impost upon those provinces, as would justify it in settling the bazaar duties of a village.

So little appreciation is there, moreover, of what that change means, that Sir Charles Wood told me, in the course of a conversation I had with him, upon my arrival from India in 1864, that *no change* would be made in the Land Settlement of the country. Within three months of that assurance, a Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenue was proclaimed throughout the whole of the provinces I have named! The news of this revolution has been received almost without comment in this country. I do not hesitate to say, that peaceful rule of India in the future will be impossible, if Parliament do not lay its arrest upon the monstrous folly of which that settlement is the expression. There has been no Select Committee of Inquiry into Indian affairs since 1858—9, and if ever such a Committee were needed it is certainly at this crisis, when the whole fiscal system of India is to be recast, apparently, upon the model of this country, while everything in the circumstances of that Empire, speaks trumpet-tongued to us of the danger of such a course.

It is a curious fact that this great revolution is being carried through, in the teeth of an almost unanimous expression of opinion against it, in the leading organs of this country

no later than 1862, when it was presented in the far less fatal shape of Lord Canning's famous Land Resolution. On that occasion, the *Times*, better informed than it is now, assured us that the scheme was nothing less than "a total subversion of the fundamental principles of Indian Government thoroughly understood and deliberately adopted by the great statesmen who ruled India under the Company. It is the surrender of a radical principle of our Indian policy. *It is the sacrifice of the one single opportunity left in the world of carrying out in practice the essential principle of political economy in the maintenance of a community with entire justice and without waste. From the first hour when the philosophy of administration has been understood, it has been admitted that the true source of State revenue is the land, and the only sound policy is to preserve the land as the property of the State. The land is the one species of property which necessarily and perdurably increases in value by the mere growth of society, and which can therefore be charged with the support of the State, precluding all burdens upon individuals, and precisely adapting itself to the demands upon it. The misfortune of all the Western kingdoms of the world has been, that this discovery was not clearly made till the practical application of it had become impossible, through the appropriation of the soil as private property; and when India came into the hands of our fathers, they found themselves in possession of the one opportunity left in the*

“ world for carrying on government without taxation, and
“ without the necessity for ever instituting taxes.”

The *Daily News* warned us with equal vigour against the minor change that was then contemplated; while now that a revolution of ten times its gravity is advancing with giant footsteps towards completion, almost no voice is raised in its arrest. One of the great objects of my address to the Chamber was to awaken attention to this subject, while there is yet time for inquiry; the others I had in view, will speak for themselves. And I venture earnestly to beg, in the interests of our great Indian Empire, a patient hearing of considerations novel to the English mind, but vital to the welfare of India.

LONDON, *February*, 1866.

SPEECH.

SIR,—I have listened with great attention to the speeches which have been delivered here this morning, and before entering upon any consideration of the special propositions on which you invite discussion, I must be allowed to make some remarks upon what has fallen from the gentlemen who have preceded me. You opened the meeting, Sir, yourself, by quoting with great approval from an Indian journal the statement that India had allowed the fairest opportunity a nation ever possessed “of establishing, once and for ever, a lasting and lucrative trade in cotton” to slip by her without improvement. The exact quotation was as follows: “It is obvious that the prosperity of a country would be better promoted by a ready alacrity in seizing the great opportunities of improvement which the fluctuation of events is now and again placing within our reach. Never had a nation a fairer opportunity of establishing, once and for ever, a lasting and lucrative trade in cotton than that which the American war offered, and never has a nation more grievously neglected it. . . . It was known that our staple was bad, and in normal states of the market could not hold its ground against that of America; and, instead of any vigorous and enlightened efforts being made to improve it, or to compel improvement, which would have been the exercise merely of a humane despotism, we have a Cotton Frauds Act as the *summum bonum* of legislative wisdom, and a Cotton Commissioner experimenting, and still experimenting and distributing a few pounds of New Orleans seed annually in Mofussil.”

Now, Sir, the journal you have quoted represents largely the non-official mind of India, and I must state, at the outset of my speech, my deep regret that this Chamber so constantly reflects the uninformed opinions of this class. It is one of our misfortunes, Sir—and one that admits of no remedy—that you will never get, and never can expect to get, an enlightened and well-informed judgment upon the affairs of India from the non-official body in that country.

The Bombay Chamber of Commerce at this moment consists of a body of young men, than whom no better judges of piece goods and cotton, I dare say, could be found in the world, but who are void of much practical wisdom on political subjects, and who have necessarily little acquaintance with Indian affairs. You send out these young men at twenty or twenty-two years of age, to sell piece goods for you, and to buy cotton; and they commonly retire from the country within eight or ten years. The consequence is that the only deliberative non-official body we have, the Chamber—whose opinions you are constantly reflecting here—is of an average age of twenty-seven or twenty-eight years. Well, do you think you are likely, Sir, to get much matured wisdom from such a body, or much safe guidance upon the troubled sea of Indian affairs?

From curiosity, I tried out for myself the other day the average age of some twenty members of your House of Commons, taken at random, and of the Peers; and I found the average age of the Lower House to be fifty-four years, of the Lords, fifty-seven. And can any man doubt that it is because of this preponderance of age in your national councils, that so much practical wisdom guides them, and that so seldom is any step taken, in either House, which comes afterwards to be regretted? But what would be the effect, Sir, of getting together a Parliament of the average age of twenty-eight years? I would beg the Chamber to weigh this consideration well. You never, Sir, *can* get from the non-official body of India, an opinion upon public affairs

that you may safely trust; and so long as this Chamber continues to reflect that opinion so largely as it does, its influence upon the conduct of our affairs cannot be otherwise than perilous. Go back now to the quotation you read, and allow me to cast a little light upon it. You will remember that the Cotton Frauds Act emanated from this Chamber. You expressed a strong opinion as to the necessity of such an Act: and in furtherance of your wishes the Government of Bombay appointed a Committee to draft an enactment upon the subject. Two or three of the most prominent merchants of Bombay (the Hon. Mr. Scott amongst them) sat upon that Committee, and both official and non-official members worked loyally at its construction. The Bill was at last published. It was not a perfect Bill; but it was the best Bill the Committee could draft; and how was it received? Why that very journal you have quoted with so much approval, did its utmost to prevent the Bill becoming law! The Government had inadvertently omitted to consult the Chamber *collectively*, in the preparation of the measure; and that wise body of very young men almost insolently told the Government that it need look for no help from them to carry the measure into effect. The dignity of these young gentlemen was offended. They had been insulted, and what they could do they did, to thwart the measure.

Now it is desirable, perhaps, gentlemen, that I should, as bearing on my practical knowledge of these questions, say, that I am proprietor of the *Times of India*, and edited that journal myself from 1857 to 1864. But it happens that I am more. I am a non-official of the non-officials, for I am one of those very coffee-planters of the Neilgherry Hills, upon whose woes Mr. Danby Seymour has been touching this morning. I possess one of the largest estates upon those hills, and have, at this moment, nearly 300 men at work upon it. I have no connexion with Government, direct or remote. I have no expectations from it whatever; but I have had the advantage of watching its course very closely for many

years past, as a political writer. Well, gentlemen, I tell you that it is a libel upon the Government of India to say—as has been said here this morning—that it is disaffected to European enterprise in India. I affirm, from a long course of observation upon the spot, and after full opportunity of forming an unbiassed judgment, that, upon the whole, the Government of India is as wishful to promote European enterprise in India, and push forward the affairs of that country, as this Chamber. You have had a long impeachment, gentlemen, this morning, of the Indian Government from Mr. Dickenson. Now I have the warmest regard for Mr. Dickenson, as a sincere friend of India. I know him to be such, but I know him also to be wrong in this matter. Some years ago, we pulled very much together, when urgent reforms were required; but Mr. Dickenson has been ill-informed on Indian subjects of late years. He has done what you have done, reflected too faithfully the uninformed non-official opinion of India; and he has, therefore, gone wrong. I will give you an instance of it. It is not yet four years since Mr. Dickenson brought out a pamphlet by a Mr. Brown, of Tellicherry, upon Indian affairs. So important did Mr. Dickenson deem it to be, that he himself wrote a preface to it, and launched it from the gates of the Reform Society at the Indian Government. And what was Mr. Brown's complaint? A passionate protest against our injustice to the people of India, in allowing Cotton and Seeds to escape the export duty we levied upon the coarse grains grown in the country! Neither Mr. Dickenson nor Mr. Brown could see, that we did so in the ryot's own interest, that he might compete on the best possible terms with other producers of cotton and seeds. Now, gentlemen, suppose for one moment that the Indian Government had listened to Mr. Dickenson's representations, and put an export duty on cotton, I ask you what would have been the judgment of this Chamber upon the matter? And it is Mr. Dickenson who so vehemently denounces this morning the misgovernment of India, as the cause of your getting no more cotton therefrom.

But again, you heard the same gentleman complain that the coffee-planters of India were left without roads to their estates, and Mr. Danby Seymour seemed to be at one with him. Now I beg the Chamber to observe how readily it may be misled upon such subjects. I am, as I have told you, one of these very Neilgherry coffee-planters, but I have never dreamed of reproaching Government that it had made no road to my estate. These coffee lands lie in inaccessible, out-of-the-way localities, where no roads exist, but simply mountain paths. The coffee-planter selects land in these districts, with the full knowledge that he will find great difficulty in getting his crops to the seaside. Were the lands more accessible, did good roads exist to them, he would have to pay a very high price for them, where he now obtains them for an almost nominal cost. But he has no sooner opened his estate, and brought it into bearing, than he begins to cry out against the Government, because of the difficulty of getting his produce down to the plains. But is the Government to blame for that? Is the Government—all the energies and resources of which are unequal to construct roads, even in the plains—to go up into the hills, and make them for the planter? Let him do, Sir, as I have done, make them for himself. It was only yesterday that I accepted a bill for £500, drawn by my partner, at Coonoor, for making roads to our estate; and I repudiate Mr. Danby Seymour's sympathy, and Mr. Dickenson's remonstrances, on our behalf. This incessant calling upon Government to help us is most unhealthy, and, allow me to add, most un-English. You must not take up such outcries, gentlemen, in this Chamber, if your influence is to be a right one, but must regard with more suspicion than you are accustomed to show, the representations of the non-official class in India.

I am truly sorry, gentlemen, to have had to complain of the tenor of Mr. Dickenson's address, for I have a sincere admiration for his disinterested and laborious efforts on behalf of India. I only wish they had been of late years more wisely directed.

I will now proceed, Sir, to take up, in regular order, the propositions for discussing which we are invited here to-day. The first of them is this :—

The impolicy of levying duties on Cotton goods and Yarns imported into India.

Gentlemen, you want in this Chamber greater breadth in your treatment of Indian affairs. I agree with you that it is bad policy to levy duties on yarn and piece goods imported into India, but not on the ground on which you come to that conclusion. I tell you that it is bad policy to levy Customs duties *at all* in India, because you never can get a revenue from such duties. A tax never draws well, till it reaches the masses. Now it so happens, that the only articles of general consumption that pass through the Indian Custom-house, or are ever likely to pass through it, are the products of your mills and looms. The total gross revenue we are deriving at this moment from the vast network of Customs machinery which stretches along our coast of 3,500 miles, is less than £2,200,000 ! And, gentlemen, you will never get much more. The existence of Custom-houses in India is but a wretched imitation of the fiscal system which has grown up in Europe, under a condition of things totally different from what prevails in India, or ever can prevail there. You find no difficulty in this country in raising a vast revenue with great ease through your Custom-houses. But why ? Because through your Custom-houses lies the highway of half-a-dozen products of the world's industry, that are consumed by every man, woman, and child in the country. Thus you get a very large revenue from a small duty upon tea, because every one drinks tea ; from coffee, because every one drinks coffee ; from sugar, because every one uses sugar ; and so on. *A tax never draws well, till it reaches the masses.* And so, the *only* important source of revenue in our Customs list in India, is just those very manufactures which you want to see imported free. I, also, should like to see them imported

free; but as they yield us half our revenue from Customs, if you admit them free, you must admit everything else free. And that, I believe, is our right policy in India: free ports everywhere; because under no conceivable condition of things, can we ever hope to get a revenue of any moment from Customs. It is because of this, that I hold so strongly the impolicy and danger of tampering with the one great and inexhaustible source of revenue in India—*the land!* The advocates of a change tell you that if you will permanently settle the land-tax, the people will soon show a power of consuming *dutiable* articles that will make you independent of the land-tax. But *what* dutiable articles? Is it to be tea, the people are going to consume; or sugar; or coffee? Why, they are all grown at their doors. Is it to be spirits? The 40,000,000 of Mussulmans *cannot*, and the masses of the Hindoo people *will* not, touch them; and I hope never will.

My quarrel, Sir, with the men who are tampering with our land revenue is this, that while they cannot point out an article or product of any kind, from which there is even a remote prospect of our ever getting revenue in India through the Custom-house, they would have us be content with general assurances that we need have no fear upon the subject. To show, Sir, how inelastic our Customs are, allow me to point out that we are getting very little more to-day from this source, than we were forty to fifty years ago:—

CUSTOMS REVENUE—INDIA.

1817-18 to 1821-22 . . .	£1,667,000
1827-28 to 1831-32 . . .	1,747,000
1865-6	2,191,180

These figures represent the average annual revenue from Customs forty years ago, and the total estimated revenue of the present year. You sent us the late Mr. Wilson to set our finances right, and I would speak with every respect for the memory of that distinguished man; but so

little insight had Mr. Wilson into our real condition, that even *he* dreamed of a large revenue from Custom-houses. But did he find any new dutiable articles that he might tax? No; nor will such ever be found in the list of our imports, unless you make up your minds to tax bullion, and metals, and machinery. All that Mr. Wilson could do was to raise the rates to 20 per cent. By this spasm he screwed the revenue temporarily up to £4,000,000, to sink back within two or three years to its old level of £2,000,000, when his highly prohibitive tariff was abandoned. You may lay it down, gentlemen, as an axiom of Indian finance, that you will never realise a revenue through your Customs establishments. Take the duty off piece goods and yarns, and we have £1,000,000 of gross revenue left;* from which all the charges of collection over 3,500 miles of sea-board have to be deducted. Everything in our circumstances points to the propriety of our declaring free-trade with the world—not comparative free-trade, as you have it here, but absolute; that we open our ports to the ships of all nations, and taking upon ourselves the trifling charges of harbour dues, light dues, and pilot dues, bid all the ships that traverse the ocean “come and welcome” to India, without imposts of any kind. It is impossible to say what the seaborne commerce of India might not become under wise government; but, gentlemen, while declaring her ports free, we must hold fast by her land-tax, for it is the *one* certain source, and the only certain source, of her revenue.

Let me sum up. If we are to have Custom-houses in India at all, then must we pronounce against your first proposition, which declares the impolicy of our levying duty upon piece goods and yarn; for to retain our Custom-houses, and abolish our chief source of revenue therefrom, is plainly absurd. Rather than see such deference shown to the interests of this Chamber, I would consent to an excise

* Raised from nearly 1,000 articles of import and export!

upon the produce of the Bombay mills. For let it be well understood, that the duties we are levying upon your manufactures, are in no sense whatever *protective*. They are imposed simply for purposes of revenue; and if we are to retain import duties at all, then must these be retained. I am not even prepared to say that they ought not to be increased, in such event; but I have told you freely my conviction that the imposition of such duties, at all, in India is an error in our fiscal system, arising from a mischievous caricature of the highly artificial system of taxation that prevails in this country.

I need say very little, Sir, upon the second subject on your paper :—

“ The impolicy of Export Duties, as shown in the case of Saltpetre.”

What I have said on the subject of import duties, applies with still greater force to export duties, in a country like India. An export duty, I suppose, is never defensible, except in those rare cases where a country possesses the monopoly of some production. An export duty was laid upon Indian saltpetre, by the late Mr. Wilson, under the impression that Bengal possessed a virtual monopoly of the supply. I shared the belief with that gentleman, but I understand that it is now found that the cheaper salts produced in America, and in France, are competing successfully with the saltpetre of Bengal. Well, if that be so, the export duty levied in the Indian ports should, of course, be remitted at once.

But here, again, Sir, let us get upon a broader platform. Export duties in India are a mistake altogether, and should be wholly given up. We are compelled, by the competition which the ryot has to encounter from the producers of other lands, to allow Cotton, Seeds, and others of our great exports, an exemption from export duties; and the result is, that our vast export trade is burdened with all the forms of a cumbrous Customs' procedure, for

the sake of a revenue little better than nominal. I have not the statistics of the last two or three years with me, but in 1862 I directed the attention of the Bombay Chamber to this subject, in the *Times of India*, as follows:—

“The total value of our exports during the last year, was upwards of £21,000,000. Will it be credited, then, that the gross amount of export duty, realised by the cumbrous and vexatious machinery appointed to collect it, was just £54,416 sterling! The truth is, that in so far as our export trade is concerned, we are compelled to allow it to be free of all but nominal imposts, while we yet mischievously incumber it with an irritating and expensive Customs procedure, that could not be more elaborate, though we were deriving millions from its existence. Let the Chamber of Commerce weigh the fact, that our export trade of twenty-one millions sterling is burdened with all the forms of an elaborate Customs Act for the sake of £54,000 a-year—a sum probably not amounting to what our merchants have to pay in the shape of salaries for clearing clerks, and hardly more than equivalent to the pay of the establishment required to make the levy. On our import trade of £22,000,000 we realised during the year the gross sum of £774,861, against which have to be set about £50,000 for drawback, and all the expenses of the collection. Of this sum, moreover, the duty on yarn and piece goods alone amounted to £360,000, or nearly one-half of the gross collections of the port. As the Chamber knows very well, it will not be long before this amount will have to be sacrificed to Manchester demands, when the fact stands revealed that for the sake of a gross collection of £353,000, or thereabouts, we are wise enough to burden a trade of £42,000,000 sterling, with all the hindrances a Custom-house offers to its growth. To increase the pressure of either the import or export duties would be next to impossible, and how wild is the idea of our ever depending thereon in India, for the national expenditure, is clear.”

The belief that I would urge upon this Chamber, Sir, is this, that the Custom-house is an institution unsuited

to our circumstances in India altogether. It costs us far more in the way of hindrance to our trade, than we derive from it, or ever can derive from it. The belief that we shall ever be able to depend upon indirect taxation for the national income will shipwreck us, if we are unwise enough to trust to it; whereas, by opening all the ports of India to an unfettered commerce, we should see a development of its trade that would strike the world with wonder. To illustrate the greater folly by the less, can there be a more pitiful exhibition of the "traditional wisdom" which is forced upon us, than the levy of light dues and harbour dues in our ports? You have not found out yet, even in this country, Sir, all the secrets of successful intercourse with the world. In private life, who that wishes to see his friends, would direct the keeper of his lodge to demand a toll of every visitor to keep the carriage-drive in order, and to pay the cost of lighting it? Not one whit more reasonable are the light dues and harbour dues you have learned from your fathers to levy upon the shipping that comes to your ports, and which you make us also levy in India. Allow us to publish to the shipping of the world that so desirous are we of their coming to our ports, that they shall be free to come and go unchallenged; that we will levy no due of any kind upon ship or cargo, but will regard all the favour of the visit as conferred upon ourselves; that we will lighten the approaches, and mark the dangers, and point out the anchorages of our harbours at our own expense, and that all we ask of them is to COME! The result of such a course would be that, within 20 years, India would lead the commerce of the world, and you would find all other nations pressing in our wake, imitating, as far as was possible to them, our example, and wondering at our fortunes and our future.

And now, Sir, about waste lands. We are asked to express our opinion upon

The advantages likely to attend the sale of Waste Lands in India in Fee Simple.

That it is desirable to get the waste lands of India cultivated, there can be no doubt; but you must remember,

gentlemen, that it is not waste lands for the growth of cotton, or any other staple of the plains, that all the agitation in India has been about ; but waste lands for the growth of tea and coffee. Now, I am a coffee-planter myself ; but I have learned, from my vocation as editor, I suppose, to take a broader interest in India than planters usually do, and I cannot conceal from myself that the advantages which are expected to flow from the planting of tea and coffee on the mountain slopes of India, are greatly over-estimated.

It is from no love of paradox, nor from any wish to depreciate the planter, that I affirm that the advantages derived by the people of India from the presence of the planter, are far from being as important as he supposes. So settled is the belief that we are to derive immense advantages from the enterprise of English planters, that it is almost dangerous to venture upon an investigation of its grounds. And yet nothing can be more superficial, than popular impressions upon the point. If you inquire at all closely into the subject, it will appear that all the direct advantages of the enterprise, are enjoyed by the planter himself ; and that the indirect ones the country may hope to reap therefrom, are by no means of the magnitude popularly assigned them. It is overlooked, I think, that there is a wide difference between the successful cultivation of a new article of export upon the waste hills of a country, and the successful cultivation of the same article upon the lands already under cultivation. Tea and coffee planting by Europeans upon the waste mountain slopes of India, will have an altogether different effect upon the country, from the successful cultivation of the same products in the plains. For the successful growth of a new export in the cultivated lands of a country, enhances the value of its whole area ; not so the growth of a new export upon its wastes. In the former case, the export displaces less valuable crops ; and, contracting the acreage under such crops, will raise the value of all descriptions of produce together, to the indefinite advantage of the agriculturist. In the case of hill

wastes, however, brought under cultivation with products that cannot be grown in the plains, it seems to me that the agriculturist must lose much of what the labouring class gains. In other words, the demand for labour upon the hill plantations, makes labour dearer in the plains. The mere labourer will gain by this, of course; but it will be at the expense of the producer, who will find the cost of cultivation proportionately enhanced of every staple in which he has to compete with other lands. Thus the advantages the tea and coffee planter's presence brings with it, are largely counterbalanced by the injury it inflicts on the plains. The cultivation of tea and coffee in the hills makes the cost of producing cotton and linseed in the plains greater than before; and, by so much, places the producer at a disadvantage in competing with the agriculture of other lands. For it must be remembered that this is not the case of a land suffering under a surplusage of labour, but of a land in which the dearth of labour is already severely felt. I trust that no one will suppose that I repine at the labourer's good fortune. I am simply pointing out considerations in connexion with European planting, that have been, I think, overlooked.

In the next place, the planter in nineteen cases out of twenty will be an "absentee landlord," drawing a large revenue, as time wears on, from India, and spending it in England. This, of itself, is a very important drawback, in no way counterbalanced by the fact, that the plantations may pass eventually by purchase into native hands; since the purchase-money of these estates, their capitalised value, will find its way sooner or later to Europe. The money paid by the planter for the fee-simple of the land, is too trifling in amount, to be worth estimating in this inquiry. What, then, are the advantages which India is to derive from a cultivation, the profits of which go to enrich not her own children, but ourselves? No doubt it will be replied, that the mere presence of a body of Europeans in the country engaged in such pursuits, will exercise a beneficial influence upon the character, and the future, of the people. I

am disposed to allow full weight to this consideration; but am afraid that the history of colonisation in all parts of the world, is far from encouraging the anticipations formed on this head. To come nearer home, what have the indigo planters done for Bengal, during the half-century of their fortune-making therein? What could be more demoralising to both races, than the nature of the relations subsisting between them, at its close? And as to securing good government for the people, the Bengal planters were willing enough, it is to be feared, to have allowed the old state of matters to have remained until doomsday, so long as their own powers remained intact.

But let us suppose, that the advantages which are to flow from planting enterprise in India, are to be all that is predicted of it, what grievance is there in the Government putting those tea and coffee lands up to auction, that it may obtain the best possible price for them? So restricted are they in extent—at the Neilgherries, for instance—that it is difficult, if not impossible, any longer to obtain land there at all. I myself was one of those aggrieved gentlemen who applied for land under Lord Canning's rules, and had to submit to take it under Sir Charles Wood's. I certainly had hoped that I should get it at the upset price of Rs.5 an acre. But those "rascally" natives, who knew the value of the land as well as my partner, ran us up to Rs.18 the acre, for a large part of it. But I made no grievance of the thing; I was but too glad to get the land even at that rate. The newspapers, however, who never knew that I was the purchaser, took the cudgels up for me, to my great amusement, and abused the Government roundly for the exaction. As a matter of fact, Sir, there never was of late years, any unreasonable difficulty in getting waste lands in India. In proof of this, I point you to the fact that the Wynaad, and the Neilgherries on our side of India, were filled with coffee plantations; and on the Bengal side, in Assam, Cachar, and Darjeeling, its great tea districts, no fewer than 196 estates were under cultivation in 1861, before Lord Canning's Resolutions were even heard of!

The tea plant was first discovered growing wild in Cachar, in the year 1855, and the total area under lease in Bengal for cultivation, at the close of April, 1861—that is, within six years—is supposed to have been not less than 200,000 acres. Could any more conclusive proof be given of the sort of agitation, in deference to which the land resolution of Lord Canning was passed? The truth is, that the crime of the State was, that it attempted in any way to keep a reserved rent for the Commonwealth, in the limited districts of the country, which were found suited to tea and coffee cultivation. Sick with anxiety to get the land into their possession, the needy adventurers of Calcutta screamed with rage at every intimation on the part of Government, that the land should only be sold at its fair value, until they frightened the timid counsellors around Lord Canning into the unconditional promise of selling it to the first comer at Rs.5 per acre. That no unreasonable obstacle ever existed to the obtaining of land in these districts, I have shown; while the sort of applications that were made for land received a fair illustration in the case of Messrs. Barry and Hernott, who obtained—and of Sir J. P. Grant, be it remembered, too—nearly twenty thousand acres of tea land in Cachar, and had opened just fifty acres at the close of the year 1860-61, at which date they were employing twenty-two coolies in developing the resources of the country! Is it not lamentable, gentlemen, that you should be misled by the representations of such men?

You have had, this morning, from the lips of Mr. Danby Seymour, a very fair illustration of the sort of demand I am exposing. You remember, Sir, that he called your attention to the fact that Mr. Temple, Commissioner of Nagpore, had been rebuked by the Government of Calcutta for wishing to sell 16,000 acres of land, to some one who had applied for it. And you remember the price that was to be paid for it—sixpence per acre. That is to say, the Government of India did very wrong to refuse to alienate in perpetuity about thirty square miles of territory, when the magnificent

sum of £400 was offered for the purchase. Why at that moment, Sir, we were sending a railway into the heart of Nagpore, at the cost of £20,000 a-mile! My humble judgment is, that the Government of India—and by that I mean the Commonwealth of India—is better off to-day with those thirty square miles of land in its possession, than it would have been with the £400 offered in exchange for them.

Gentlemen, you must remember that the Government of India dare not lose sight of the fact, that its *one source of revenue is the land*, now and for all time, so far as we can see.

And this leads me, Sir, to remark further, that what the planter really demands in India, is a good deal more than what you call fee-simple. For there is nothing inconsistent with a fee-simple title, in the levying a tax upon the land. Now the grievance of the planting body is, that the title does not carry with it exemption from the land-tax. Of course it would very materially enhance the value of *my* estate, if no land-tax were to be levied upon it now or for ever. But I know that the Government must have a revenue; and I see clearly that a land-tax is the wisest of all taxes in India, and I will not be a party to any selfish agitation for a concession, that the Government of India ought not to make. My title is perfect, though I do pay a land-tax of Rs.2 an acre, and shall probably by-and-bye have to pay more. The Commonwealth has a right to tax my land, if that is the wisest and most equitable way of raising the revenue; and I believe it is. What the planters of India required was far more, I say, than a fee-simple right in their lands. They demanded not only absolute ownership of the land, but a pledge that we would never lay a tax thereon; an exemption which fee-simple title in this country so little conveys, that one of the first economists of the age asserts his opinion, that the State has a clear and equitable right *even here* to the whole “future increment of rent” that may arise from causes independent of the landlord’s exertions, if it choose to assert it. Mr. Damby Seymour must pardon my telling

him that fee-simple titles exist throughout India, although we do raise a revenue from the land.

The terms "lease" and "rent" when applied to India, are very misleading to English ears. You have heard this morning Mr. Cassels' lucid description of the thirty years' leases of the Bombay Presidency; and I endorse heartily all that gentleman's statements upon the subject. The holders of these leases have as indefeasible a title to their lands, as any fee-simple in existence. No power on earth can disturb their possession of them. Their title is absolute. They hold for ever; subject only to a trifling impost upon their estates, liable to enhancement, and quite possibly to reduction, once in a generation of years.

And here, Sir, let me beg your careful attention to a fact I am anxious to fasten in the memory of this Chamber. You have heard it asserted this morning by Mr. Seymour, upon high official authority, that the land revenue of India is a rack-rent of one-half, and even two-thirds, the produce of the ryots' fields. Sir, it is not very creditable to the Government of India, that it was left to a journalist there to explode this absurdity. It is only within the last three or four years, that I have succeeded, I think, in India, in dissipating this mischievous delusion. It lingers, no doubt, still here and there in some muddled official brains, and forms too convenient a cry for selfish agitators to be completely silenced as yet. But if Mr. Danby Seymour will take out his pencil, and note down a few figures that I will give him, I think I can convince him that he is in error.

Let us suppose, then, for a moment that he is right in his belief, that the assessment we are levying absorbs one-half of the gross produce of the land. It will, then, follow—since the gross land revenue of our territories amounts to no more than £20,000,000 sterling—that the total value of the produce is just twice that sum, or £40,000,000 sterling annually. There is no escape from this conclusion in any direction. If the assessment really amount to one-half of the produce, then *must* the whole value of

that produce be just twice the amount of that assessment. But we know the amount of the assessment to a fraction; and in round figures it is £20,000,000. Plainly, then, if Mr. Seymour's statement be correct, the total value of the produce of the land is about £40,000,000 sterling annually!

But will any one who reflects at all, endorse so absurd a statement, or avow the belief that it is correct? In the first place, the whole cost of feeding 130,000,000 of people must stand represented in that sum; for that is the population of the British territories, exclusive of the Native States. In the second place, there must be represented therein the whole value of the forage and grain crops of the country for cattle, the whole value of the crops of cotton, oil seeds, spices, &c., grown for home consumption; the value also of the immense exports that we contrive to make; and, lastly, the annual accumulations of the zemindars and ryots.

I am persuaded, Sir, that the annual value of the crops of India cannot be less than three to four hundred millions sterling, and that the average pressure of our land revenue thereon, does not exceed one-fifteenth of the produce. Now, bear in mind that this is *all* the State levies upon the land. Call it rent, or call it tax, or whatever you please, this is its pressure; while it is in deference to ignorant clamour about the great pressure of this tax, that the fatal step is now being taken in India of *permanently settling it* at its present amount. I cannot find words, Sir, to express my sense of the error that Sir Charles Wood has been induced to sanction. It is my profound conviction that we have seen an end of all peaceful rule in India, if Parliament continue idle spectators of this movement. The vital question of our times in India is

THE PERPETUAL SETTLEMENT OF THE LAND TAX.

It means, Sir, the perpetual settlement of our whole revenue. It means that with a rapidly increasing expenditure, we are to divest ourselves of the only revenue we have that can reasonably be relied upon to expand. Sir Charles Wood and his Council are endorsing the popular impression

that the thirty years' leases of Bombay and the North West Provinces—although all improvements under them, made by the cultivator, are secured to him—are not a sufficiently liberal tenure to induce him to sink capital in his fields; and that, upon the whole, the land-tax of India is an impolitic tax, and presses heavily upon the industry of the country. That there is not a particle of foundation for these impressions, but that under these leases, as Mr. Cassels has shown you, the ryot is everywhere rapidly accumulating wealth; that capital is being as largely sunk in the soil, as the hoarding traditions of the country yet render possible; that the impost is a tax upon no man's produce, and upon no man's labour; that to settle it permanently will produce no real advantages, but will plunge us into certain embarrassments, and be a fraud on the whole urban population of the country; that the pressure of the impost, instead of being what it is popularly supposed to be, is so light that it is doubtful if it absorb even one-twentieth of the produce; that vast centres of wealth are growing up under the thirty years system, as Bombay with its mills, and factories, and million of people; Ahmedabad, Broach, and Dharwar, with their wealthy populations; and Kurrachee, with its giant trade; that the objection against the thirty years' leases—viz., that in their last years the tenant would fear to improve his holding—is an objection held to be of no weight in any other part of the world, and might, moreover, be entirely obviated by renewing them three, four, or five years before they fell in; and, lastly, that under the heavy and continuous rise in prices that is taking place, we ought at once to double the pay of the establishments of the country, if we would not see them demoralised,* and have no possible

* There is no measure, perhaps, more urgently called for at this moment in India, than a statesmanlike and comprehensive revision of the pay of the Establishments. Instead of patching up salaries with irregular allowances of batta and house-rent, and I know not what else, the fact should be looked full in the face, that the pay of the establishments has become altogether inadequate to maintain their efficiency. It is a fact that, during the last summer, officers of our army

means of doing so, but from the land—all these considerations are given to the winds.

It is with regret and indignation that I have seen the Home Government dragged at the heels of this folly. The Council, which should have stood between the selfish agitators in India, whose clamour initiated the movement, and the Government, have lent themselves to it; and they who, like Sir John Lawrence, have approved this change, have done so to a man upon merely general impressions, as their published minutes upon the subject show. A Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenue of the whole of the North West Provinces has just been declared, without the Government possessing as much exact information upon the pressure of the tax, as would have justified it in determining the bazaar duties of a village. That Mr. Laing and Lord Canning should have been carried away by the outcry, was deplorable enough; but that a majority of Sir Charles Wood's Council should have possessed so little insight into the conditions of Indian finance, as to sanction this fatal resolution, is amazing. Sir, that Settlement of the North West Provinces should be instantly subverted at any cost, and the course upon which the Government has entered arrested by Parliament. For

in Poonah were obliged to restrict their wives and children to the use of fresh meat twice a-week, owing to the enormous rise in the prices of all the necessaries of life. The fact is surely disgraceful to our administration. The ryots of the presidency, meanwhile, are revelling in prosperity, and it is in these circumstances that we are told we must fix the land-tax in perpetuity, lest we should depress their enterprise! Mr. Justice Couch, of the High Court of Bombay, himself told me, about two years ago, that had he known the frightful cost of living in Bombay, he would not have accepted the judgeship offered to him. He had consulted Sir Erskine Perry upon the subject, and that gentleman, ignorant of the revolution that had occurred in our circumstances, had completely misled him. It is not in the Bombay Presidency only, that this change has taken place. It has taken place *everywhere*. The agricultural classes are amassing wealth, while men on fixed incomes are starving.—R. K.

let this movement progress, and within twenty years you will see the Empire torn to pieces, in the effort to resume in the way of direct taxes, what is now being cast to the winds in the mere passion for change.*

The short history of this deplorable movement, Sir, is this: The famine in the North West Provinces occurred just at the time when the great outcry about waste lands was agitating Calcutta. The late Colonel Baird Smith was deputed by Lord Canning to report upon that calamity; and Colonel Baird Smith, unfortunately for the country, had been a great apologist, as it subsequently turned out, of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal. Indeed, he had been a writer in.

* It cannot be too often repeated that we have but *one* source of revenue in India, upon the expansion of which we may reckon with confidence. We derive our present income from land, opium, salt, customs, stamps, and abkaree (spirits). I would not exaggerate the precariousness of the revenue we get from opium; but that India for all time to come, may count upon an OPIUM revenue of £7,000,000 a-year will be maintained by few persons. The SALT TAX I believe upon the whole to be a wise tax, but we have screwed it a little too high, as is clear from the smuggling that goes on in the north-west; and it would be well, perhaps, to lower it R.1 a maund. At all events no further expansion is possible. That we shall ever get a large revenue from CUSTOMS is a day-dream, as I have shown. The revenue from STAMPS will no doubt expand with our commerce, but it can never occupy more than a subordinate place in our estimates; and I have already pointed out that the habits of the people are opposed to our ever getting a large revenue from Abkaree. In these circumstances we are shut up to the land revenue, or a giant income-tax in its room. Superficial statesmen and self-seeking agitators have between them brought the future finances of the country into circumstances of the deepest peril, and the necessity of parliamentary interference, is paramount. The growing necessities of the Government will have to be provided for, and the land revenue being fixed in perpetuity, they must be provided for by taxes on realised capital and income. In attempting to make good the loss in this way, the Empire will be torn to pieces by excitement, industry will be paralyzed, and capital driven to happier shores. It is almost incredible, but true, that the people of India are profoundly indifferent to this Permanent Settlement gift. We owe it entirely to the doctrinaire counsels of men without insight into our real condition.—R. K.

the newspapers, I believe, in its defence. Full of belief therein, he went upon his mission of inquiry; and, as might have been expected, recommended at its close a Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenue, as the best device he could hit upon for mitigating famines in the future. The error which Colonel Smith made was plain. Under their thirty years' leases, he said, the people had grown so wealthy that they stood up well under the famine: only make their settlement perpetual, and they will encounter future famines without fear. It is amazing that so palpable a *non sequitur* should have affected Lord Canning's Council as it did. That it is not the *permanency* of the settlement, but its *pressure*, that must determine the status of the cultivator, is as clear as the noonday sun, if men look at the subject without spectacles. A permanent rack-rent will impoverish a people (just as Bengal is now impoverished*) more surely

* No single consideration, perhaps, has had so much weight in this disastrous change, as the general belief that Bengal has grown wealthy under its Permanent Settlement. That belief, so sedulously fostered by Bengal civilians and Bengal newspapers, and so long accepted as true, has now, I believe, been exploded everywhere, except in the columns devoted by the *Times* to the letters of its Calcutta correspondent. Instead of being enriched by its settlement, the province has been absolutely *beggared* under it. There is not a district in India at this moment, in which the masses of the people are not well-to-do, when their condition is compared with the hopeless, abject poverty of the masses in Bengal. I must refer the reader who would like to satisfy himself upon this point to "The Indian Land Question: a Timely Warning" (Smith, Elder, and Co., 1865). In India itself there is no longer any doubt upon the subject. The only province of the country, really rack-rented, is Bengal, under the frightful system of sub-letting to which the Permanent Settlement has given birth there. It is impossible to use language too strong to describe the hopeless condition of that province. We have beggared the ryot, that we might raise up a race of dissipated, selfish, rack-renting landlards upon the soil. Mr. Marshman, the former editor of the *Friend of India*, tells us that "the condition of the Bengal peasant" is almost as wretched and degraded as it is possible to conceive; living "in the most miserable hovel, scarcely fit for a dog-kennel, covered with tattered rags, and unable, in too many instances, to procure more than

than a thirty years' one. The fact was that the assessment was not only very light in the North West Provinces—as it now is everywhere—but that the great rise in prices of late years had reduced it to almost a nominal impost. That it was not necessary to give the North West Provinces a permanent settlement, Colonel Smith told us himself in that report, when he said that the average selling price of the cultivators' holdings throughout the province was 22 years' purchase of the assessment! And they would have been much more to-day. In the Bombay Presidency these leases command almost fabulous premiums. But Colonel Smith's recommendation unhappily fell in with the temper of the times. Calcutta was in a ferment about the *land*. A very weak man—I don't mean Mr. Laing—was at the Viceroy's elbow, and, as I have already said, the determination was come to to settle the land revenue in perpetuity throughout those provinces, while the Government had not sufficient information in its hands to settle, as I have already said, even the bazaar duties of a village. I mean, Sir, *exact* information. For we have no statistics whatever in India; and it was not until after this frightful error had been resolved upon, that men began to become aware of what the real pressure of the land revenue was.

Great stress, Sir, was unhappily laid upon the opinion of Sir John Lawrence. Well, Sir John Lawrence told us that we had better settle the land revenue in perpetuity, because the teaching of his long experience had been that the Government was never able to increase the assessments, let them be revised as often as they might. The simple answer to this was, that Sir John Lawrence's experience was that of a past generation. During the first fifty years of

“a single meal a-day for himself and family. The Bengal ryot knows nothing of the most ordinary comforts of life. We speak without exaggeration when we affirm that, if the real condition of those who raise the harvest, which yields between three and four millions a-year, was fully known, it would make the ears of every one who heard thereof to tingle.”—R. K.

the century, the agriculture of India was very much depressed, owing more to the change of administrative system we had everywhere introduced than to any other cause. With prices constantly falling, it was not very wonderful, I think, that Sir John Lawrence's experience was what it was. But what of a period of such giant enhancement as has set in upon us, within the last few years? Why the saleable value of the land of India within the last ten years has been quadrupled; and in utter oversight of this revolution, Sir John Lawrence bids us be guided by his experience as a revenue officer, acquired under a totally different condition of things, twenty-five or thirty years before.

Let me point out to the Chamber how vital a bearing the Permanent Settlement has upon the great question of public works in India. You must remember that we are taking from the land the merest fraction of its true rent. We take no more than we absolutely require for the administration of the laws, and the maintenance of Government. The popular idea in this country—and it is shared, I regret to see, by the *Times*—is, that we are acting as landlords towards the agricultural classes, and have, therefore, all the duties of landlords devolving upon us. But we are doing nothing of the kind. We have not a tenant, as a rule, who is not occupying at a quit-rent. We take no more from the land than is absolutely required to defray the expenses of the State. What the true rent of India amounts to it is impossible to say, but it cannot fall far short of £80,000,000 to £100,000,000 sterling a year. Now the Permanent Settlement abandons in perpetuity to the cultivator, what every Government of India before our own, has held in trust for the general Commonwealth—viz., the whole margin that lies between our assessment of £20,000,000 and this vast sum of £80,000,000. Well, if we are to do this, if we are to abandon absolutely, instead of merely holding in abeyance, our rights as landlord, we must, of course, instantly cease all expenditure for improving the land. For where is the money to come from? Having already con-

ferred upon the cultivator an enormous proprietary right in the soil, which neither he nor his fathers knew, are we next to tax the urban classes of the country to give him roads, and railroads, and irrigation works, and canals?

Every shilling that has been expended by the State on works of improvement in Bengal since 1792, has been a plain fraud upon the rest of India, because we abandoned in that province, in that year, all right to share in the improved value of its soil. Are not these considerations plain even to a child, when fairly placed before it? And yet within the last eighteen months, the same folly has been perpetrated in the North West Provinces, while the Government still professes to dream of a great expenditure upon public works therein. Does not such folly justify the alarm I express? Tell me, Sir, who should make the great public improvements required at this moment in Bengal—the State, or the zemindars, to whom the State has abandoned nearly the *whole* rent of the province? All that we take therefrom is between three and four millions a-year, while the true rent does not, I am persuaded, fall short of £12,000,000 to £20,000,000 a-year! The total stoppage, then, of all public works in the country, is the necessary sequence of this Permanent Settlement folly; a result which its supporters, from Sir John Lawrence downwards, have completely overlooked. The height of their statesmanship is an income-tax upon the cities, to construct public works for the zemindars!

As to waste lands for the growth of cotton, the question is really more one of *labour* than of *land*. Mr. Cassels has told you this morning, and told you truly, that every acre of cotton ground in the Bombay Presidency is already under cultivation. We have no cultivable waste lands in our presidency except in Khandeish; and the cultivation of Khandeish is a question of *labour*, not of *land*. The soil of the province is well adapted for the growth of cotton, and Khandeish was formerly one of the most fertile districts of Western India. The province was devastated, however, by Holkar in 1802, and has since become a jungle so deadly, that it is impos-

sible at certain seasons of the year to pass through it. Well, Sir, how are you going to cultivate Khandeish? I am certain that if you Manchester gentlemen will form a Company to lease half the province, the Government will give you almost any terms, short of total alienation, you may ask for. But I should myself be very sorry to take shares in your company.

I will tell you what would be the result of the enterprise. With great difficulty you would get together a body of cultivators perhaps 500 strong; you would cut down the jungle; break up the land; build your coolie lines; put in your cotton seed—and what then? The sickly season comes round, cholera breaks out in your lines, and within forty-eight hours, there would not be a coolie within fifty miles of you. This is no fancy picture, gentlemen, to scare enterprise away from us. It is the constant, everyday experience of planting in India, except in some highly-favoured districts; and do you think a Breach of Contracts Bill would keep your coolies on the estate, in such circumstances? I confess, for myself, that I despair of seeing the waste lands in the plains of India cultivated, except in the way in which they have ever been encroached upon. Under peaceful government, and with a steady and remunerative demand for their produce, the villages in the neighbourhood of these wastes, will steadily, but, in the nature of things, slowly, grow upon them, and bring them under cultivation. I have no faith in costly, spasmodic efforts to reclaim them. As a rule, labour already is so scarce in India that the procuring it is the chief difficulty of the tea and coffee planter; the popular belief in this country that India is a land burdened with a surplus population being untrue. There are districts of the country densely populated, no doubt, but any one who has once tried the experiment of inducing an Indian community to migrate from one district to another, will think twice before entering upon such an experiment a second time.

I do not think I need spend much time, Sir, over the

next subject on your list, as the Indian Government has, to a large extent, anticipated your wishes thereon :—

The Enactment of a Law providing for the Registration and Enforcement of Contracts, and the Establishment of Small Cause Courts, at convenient distances throughout the country, invested with Summary Jurisdiction.

Mr. Cassels has already told you that an Act for the Registration of Contracts was passed in India nearly eighteen months ago, and that the experiment of Small Cause Courts is now being tried on a somewhat extensive scale in the interior. I think it right to say on this subject, that while I strongly opposed the Breach of Contracts Bill—which this Chamber was so anxious to see adopted—I was the only journalist in India, I think, who attempted to give shape to its wish for a Registration Act. Such an Act has now been passed, and I need, therefore, say no more about it. It is necessary for me, however, to point out to this Chamber certain considerations affecting the Small Cause Courts experiment, which I feel satisfied have escaped your notice. You must not forget, gentlemen, that the system of protracted litigation, and of “appeals” in India, arises out of the untrustworthiness and incompetency of the subordinate courts. The right of appeal is simply an admission that we know the inferior courts to be incompetent. Well, the material we have to work with is still the same. You cannot improvise judges, as you may police constables, and there is great danger, in the establishment of these Small Cause Courts, of our handing whole districts over not only to summary, but to thoroughly corrupt, administration. A Small Cause Court without appeal, may work exceedingly well in the presidency towns, where its every judgment is liable to sharp comment in the next morning’s papers, and where everything is done in the light of day. But what of the interior, where we are now establishing them, where no sunlight reaches, and where neither press nor public exists? You make too little allowance, Sir, in this

country, for the difficulties under which the law is administered in India. A few months ago an article appeared in the *North British Review* upon "The Administration of Justice in India," from the pen of Mr. Justice Campbell, of the High Court of Calcutta, one of the barrister-civilian judges of India; and, with your permission, I will point out, in this gentleman's words, the dangers which beset the experiment upon which we have entered at your wish:—

"The evils of protracted litigation, and appeal on appeal, have long been acknowledged. To cure this was devised the system of Small Cause Courts without appeal. Now in many respects such a system has great advantages, but it is tried under most difficult circumstances. And two things seem essential to the exercise of unchecked power—*first*, men fitted to fill the post of judges, and, *second*, the control of public opinion and the publicity of the press. It is under those conditions that Small Cause judges work in England. It is otherwise in India. Government having determined to try the Small Cause system in Bengal, at once appointed a number of Small Cause judges and posted them alike in town and in rural districts. These courts have very great powers; in proportion, far beyond those of English Small Cause judges. They try absolutely, and without appeal or supervision of any kind, all personal actions of every description up to Rs.500, which is quite equal in proportion to value of money to, say, £300 in England. Two or three good judges, placed in large towns under the public view, have, we believe, done much good. But, for the rest? They are, for the most part, the old judges of the old courts transformed under a new name, with a sprinkling of Europeans taken from the lower walks of the law, but with very little knowledge of the country. The great difference, then, as compared to the old system, consists in the absence of appeal.

"Is it to be hoped and expected, that the same judges, whose proceedings were superficial and indifferent when

“they knew that they were subject to the supervision and criticism of the appellate courts, will be more careful, searching, and thorough, when they are relieved from all control, and set down in rural districts, where public opinion can scarcely touch them? We much doubt it. More than this, there is some political risk to be considered. These summary courts are essentially plaintiffs’ courts. In a country, and under a system, in which evidence is notoriously untrustworthy, and documents are supposed to be generally forged, this condition obtains. The plaintiff chooses his time for the action, not the defendant; he has abundant leisure to prepare his documents, cook his evidence, and get ready his case. Suddenly he comes down in a summary court on an unprepared defendant: the *prima facie* evidence is all on his side, and if the judge be disposed to get through his business in a rapid way, a heavy decree is passed, the execution of which will sweep away many precious rights (perhaps preserved through a lifetime of litigation) before the defendant has breathing-time.

“It has always been popularly said among the natives, that ours is the Government of the shopkeeper and the money-lender. We hear that there are signs that this feeling is much increased by the action of some of the Small Cause Courts. We remember the cause of the Sonthal rebellion. May not similar causes lead to dangerous results elsewhere?”

I need add nothing to this statement, Sir. I have read it simply to show the Chamber that the reforms which it solicits, even where practicable, are beset with dangers which it very rarely, if at all, discerns.

I come now to the *Breach of Contracts Bill*, about which so much has been said and written. Well, what is its history? Mr. Laing told you it was a bill brought into Council in the interests of the cotton-grower; but Mr. Laing’s memory was at fault. I have here with me the history of this measure, from a period long before Mr. Laing’s arrival amongst us. The *Times of India* gave the bill the

most strenuous opposition throughout, and I rejoiced to see it finally shelved. Remember, gentlemen, it is no Government official who is speaking now, but one of those very men in whose interests it was to be enacted. I say, Sir, that the bill, from first to last, was purely an indigo planters' bill. You will remember, no doubt, the Honourable Mr. Eden's proclamation, which led all the ryots of Nuddea and Jessore to rise up as one man, and repudiate the contracts they were under to grow indigo. Now, you have a very scandalous story in this city, as to the true occasion of that proclamation. I know not whether that story is true or false; and it matters little which it is; for, under any circumstances, the quarrel between Mr. Eden and the planters was a most fortunate accident. For nothing is more certain than that the very name of the indigo plant has stunk in the nostrils of the people of Bengal for the last fifty years; and no wonder, for the whole system of indigo planting, as it is improperly called, was a scandal to the English name. Several of the Calcutta newspapers, I am sorry to say, have tried to whitewash the system, and I must, therefore, go at some length into it. Now look, first, at the conditions under which the indigo planter sets to work. The first thing is to find a tract of land suited for the plant, and to discover the owner of it. The land is found, and the planter is told that the zemindar, in whose name it is held from the Government, is Gunesh Moraba; but Gunesh has sub-let it to A, and A has sub-let it to B, and B to C, and that the present holder of the lease is D. In other words, the land is already rack-rented to the last farthing. That such, Sir, is the present condition of Bengal under its vaunted Permanent Settlement, we have the testimony of the *Friend of India*; a journal that has done its best, remember, to sustain the cause of the indigo planter. Here is that journal's description of a Bengal county: "Between the zemindar and the actual cultivator there are four middlemen, as a rule, each of whom has his profit; and worse than these four, while he is their necessary result, is

“the money-lender. We have seen that the average rental paid by the landlord to the State is $6-9\frac{1}{2}$ annas per acre. As the actual cultivator pays an average in kind to rent-free landlords of Rs.4-8 per acre, the difference between that and $6-9\frac{1}{2}$ annas represents the profits spread over four middle-men and the landlord. To be able to pay that rent, the peasant borrows seed from the money-lender at from 24 to 50 and 100 per cent., according to the security.”

Now, Sir, it is upon this condition of things that indigo planting in Bengal, supervenes. Having ascertained who holds the lease of the land upon which the planter has cast his eye, he applies to him to know upon what terms he will transfer it. The man, who is already screwing all he can out of the wretched tenantry, knows perfectly well what the land is wanted for, and makes his bargain accordingly. “I am getting,” he will say, “Rs.1,000 a-year from the land; if you will farm it for Rs.13,00 it is yours.” The bargain is struck, and now the indigo planter has become the landlord. Can you conceive any position more unhappy than that of the ryot?

Having obtained the lease, the indigo planter is quite content to allow the ryots to occupy at their old rental; *only* they must purchase that privilege by growing indigo upon such lands as the planter points out; and FOR NOTHING! For that is what the thing comes to, as was shown by the report of the Indigo Commission. And I mean by that, Mr. Fergusson’s report; and Mr. Fergusson, you know, was the planters’ representative on that Commission. Can you wonder, gentlemen, that a system such as this did not work well; that the ryot groaned under it, and was beggared by it? Look at the fearful powers possessed by the planter as landlord. If the ryot, although already rack-rented, refused to grow indigo, he was liable to be driven from what had been his father’s home for a hundred generations, by a notice of enhancement of rent which he could not possibly pay.

And this is the true history of the Bengal Rent difficulty, of which you have heard so much. Armed with

powers which Lord Cornwallis never dreamed he was giving to the zemindar, the planters, within the last five years, have served notices of exorbitant enhancements of rent by hundreds of thousands upon their tenants, and when the Law Courts broke down under the pressure, these gentlemen complained of their inefficiency. Lord Cornwallis so little foresaw to what his Settlement would lead, that in his Minute of Feb. 3, 1790, he treats Mr. Shore's supposition that such enhancements would ever be attempted, as preposterous. But we have seen them not only attempted in our day, but positively upheld by no less an authority than Sir Barnes Peacock, who unhappily seems to have got tinged with this indigo quarrel. When Sir Barnes Peacock's judgment appeared I did not hesitate to declare it to be an outrage upon the ancient law and custom of India; and I have had the satisfaction, within the last six months, of seeing that judgment reversed by the unanimous verdict of the whole thirteen judges of the High Court of Calcutta.*

* The right of the cultivator in Bengal was possession of his field, at the rate per beegah at which it was assessed at the *Permanent Settlement*. Nothing is more certain, than that Lord Cornwallis intended the Settlement to be as permanent between the zemindar and ryot, as between the State and the zemindar. "Whoever cultivates the land" [Minute, February 3, 1790] *the zemindar can receive no more than the established rent*. To permit him to dispossess one cultivator, for the sole purpose of giving the land to another, would be vesting him with "a power to commit a wanton act of oppression. . . . *The rents of an estate can only be raised by inducing the ryots to cultivate the more valuable articles of produce, and to clear the extensive tracts of waste land which are to be found in almost every zumeendary in Bengal.*" What can be clearer than these statements? Lord Cornwallis supposed that he had effectually secured the ryot from enhancement of rent, except in cases where a more valuable article of produce than rice, or grain, came to be grown in his fields, when the zemindar would be entitled to receive one-third, or whatever was the established rate, of the new and more valuable produce instead of the old. The *Friend of India*, with curious inconsistency, but with truth, declared the judgment of Sir Barnes Peacock likely to create "an agrarian rising," and to make the Englishman as hated in Bengal as

But an enhancement of rent, gentlemen, was not the object of the planters. Indigo was what they wanted, and, therefore, power to compel their ryots to grow it; and it was out of this want that the Breach of Contracts Bill came. For that bill merely made perpetual Act XI. of 1860, a summary Act passed for the enforcement of indigo contracts for six months only, pending the inquiries of the Indigo Commission. The Commission brought its labours to a close with an emphatic condemnation of the whole system, and Act XI. expired by effluxion of time. The ryots to a man refused to have anything more to do with indigo; when the planters served them, as I have said, with hundreds of thousands of notices raising their rents tenfold, while they simultaneously be-

he was in Tipperary. And yet the decision simply confirmed to the planter, the very rights which the *Friend of India* had been demanding in his behalf for many months before. It now found out that so contrary was the decision of the High Court to the people's sense of justice, that the attempt to enforce it would end in making the Englishman "as hated in Bengal as he is in Tipperary." But the indigo planter was a wiser man than the *Friend of India* supposed him to be. All he wanted was power to compel the ryot to grow indigo upon the old terms, which would pay him better than any rent it was possible for him to exact from his tenantry. And so this mischievous decision of Sir Barnes Peacock was used merely to force the ryots back into the slavery, from which we hoped they had been emancipated. After the judgment, we were told that the ryots were now "willingly" entering into contracts to sow indigo, on condition that their rents were not raised more than four annas a beegah. The willingness must have been very cheerful, no doubt, when the alternative was an enhancement of rent from five annas to five rupees a beegah. The new contracts, as I learned privately from Calcutta, were being made for ten years at the old rate of six bundles for the rupee. The ryots were to cultivate at this rate, and pay more rent besides; and a penal Contract Law was much wanted to enforce these "willingly" signed agreements, although Mr. Fergusson, as the representative of the planters, had reported that "large concessions must be made at once." The planters pretended all through the dispute that the rent struggle had nothing to do with indigo: it was simply a new phase of the old quarrel.—R. K.

sieged the Government to make Act XI. perpetual. They knew very well the screw they could put upon the ryot to force him into contract with them for the hated *neel*, and all they required was a summary penal Act to enforce the contracts so compulsorily made. Now that is a plain, unvarnished account of the origin of the Contracts Bill. Reluctant to see the indigo culture of Bengal destroyed, and yet conscious that a penal bill merely to enforce indigo contracts, would be little short of an indecency, the Government of Calcutta kindly assured the world that cotton-growing, and sugar-refining, and coffee-planting, and all other European enterprise in the country, wanted the protection of such a bill. Sir, it was an unworthy pretence on the part of that Government. I, as a coffee-planter, and the employer of 500 natives of India, utterly repudiate the want of such a measure. But the mention of cotton-growing struck a chord that vibrated, unfortunately, in Bombay, and so the agitation spread to our side of India, and then Manchester took fire. Now, Sir, the short and easy proof that the bill was an indigo bill, and nothing but an indigo bill, is this: that it contemplated, almost exclusively, a description of contracts unknown for years in the cotton-growing districts of Bombay. Great stress has been laid, Sir, upon the Honourable Mr. Scott's statement of the difficulties which his firm (Messrs. Ritchie, Stuart, and Co.) had found in the cotton districts, for want of a summary Contract Law. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Scott, but it so happened that Messrs. Ritchie, Stuart, and Co.'s experience was then ten years old, and that the whole procedure of the Civil law had been changed in 1859, and had been made as summary as Mr. Scott, I think, could have wished. Did I not fear trespassing too far upon your patience, I would read to this meeting what remedies the Civil Code of 1859 already provides upon the subject; and it is a suggestive fact, that throughout the debates in Calcutta upon the bill, there was not the slightest attempt to show that the very summary procedures of that Code had been tried and failed. Again, Sir, we had but just

codified, after thirty years' deliberation, our whole Criminal Law ("Macaulay's Code," as it is called). Now this very question of indigo contracts had come up before the Commission that framed that Code, and after full deliberation they had pronounced against the making the breach of those contracts penal. And are you prepared to tell us, that to support such a system as I have described, we are to crowd our statute-book with new penal laws, lest we should discourage European enterprise? How is it, Sir, that I, a planter, want no penal Contract Law, and have never wanted one, while the tea planters of Assam and Cachar have constantly been calling upon Government to help them against their coolies? The labour contract difficulty is of the same order as the indigo difficulty: it arises from the fact that the planter does not make it worth the coolie's while to stay on his estate. If you go down into the rice plains of Bengal, and tempt coolies with six months' advance of pay to follow you up into the hills, where they will want better housing, better food, and better clothing than below, and expect them to stay there, while you pay them no more than they obtain in the plains, you are rightly punished when they escape from your estate, and defraud you of your advances. Sir, the Government cannot healthfully interfere in such quarrels. Let the planter make it worth the coolie's while to stay upon his estate, *and treat him considerately*, and he will stay. Human nature is pretty much the same, all the world over, according to my experience; amenable to the same treatment, and influenced by the same motives. Unfortunately, the planters of India hitherto have in general been needy men. It has been a struggle with them to get their estates opened at all; and while you may legitimately sympathize with their difficulties, you cannot legislate exceptionally in their behalf. I am heartily glad that we are to have no penal Contracts Bill in India, either for indigo, cotton, tea, coffee, or anything else; and I am sure that in agitating for such a measure you are not well advised. Allow me to remind you once more, that I have at

this moment nearly 300 people at work on the Neilgherries, and I suppose between 200 and 300 in the *Times of India* office at Bombay, without the least necessity for such a law. You will get troublesome labourers, sometimes, in India, as everywhere else, but I have an old-fashioned belief, that upon the whole you will find good masters the slowest to make complaints about bad workmen.

The last subject on which you invite this meeting to express an opinion is—

“The more active prosecution of Public Works in India, especially as regards Roads and Irrigation.”

Now, I agree cordially with every word that has fallen from previous speakers as to the importance of the more active prosecution of public works in India. But half the mistakes made in this country with respect to India arise from the difficulty of grasping adequately the magnitude of the country; and so it comes to pass that the handful of Englishmen who form the Government of India are perpetually “talked at” upon this subject of public works, as though it were possible to take that great empire up, and manipulate it as you would the county of Lancashire. India, Sir, is a great continent; a continent of many nations, and of vast extent; and it is almost impossible for any mind, however familiar with the country, to understand aright how vast an undertaking is the simultaneous prosecution of public works throughout the country. The task of the Indian Government is like that which would lie before the Government of this country, were the public works of all Europe suddenly cast upon its responsibility. What the full import of this last proposition of yours is, would then, perhaps, be discerned. Were the English Government, I say, charged with the responsibility of perfecting not only the vast railway system of Europe, but the construction and repair of all the roads and canals, and civil and military buildings of two-thirds of the continent, you would then understand better what our re-

sponsibility in India involves, and how absurdly incommensurate therewith have all our efforts hitherto been. •

And here, gentlemen, once more, I am obliged to state my conviction that it is not the Government of India so much as this Chamber that is to be blamed for the little that has hitherto been done. For I am entitled, I think, to regard the late Mr. Wilson as the representative of this Chamber; and it was Mr. Wilson, who, amongst other errors into which he fell, first laid down the doctrine that India alone, of all the nations of the earth, must not borrow. The rule that India shall provide whatever public works she stands in need of, out of her current revenues—her dribblets of savings from income—lays, of itself, an effectual prohibition upon the prosecution of public works in the country on any adequate scale.

It matters not that India is one of the poorest countries in the world, nor that you, the richest of them all, are constructing your very fortifications out of borrowed money—India must *not* borrow. If she wants roads, or tanks, or tramways, or canals, she must either go without them, or contrive to build them out of import duties, or perhaps an income-tax—falling with confiscatory violence upon 300,000 people for the benefit of 180,000,000—or out of export duties upon the produce of her plantations. At all events, she is not to be allowed to borrow money for the purpose, however willing foreign capitalists may be to lend it. While all other countries may borrow of you as freely as they please, the Indian Administration may not do so. There is not a Government in existence that may not borrow money on your Stock Exchange, even for purposes of war; while the Government of India is not allowed to borrow a sixpence, even for the construction of roads, or irrigational works. The special leave of Parliament has to be obtained for the purpose, although the same Parliament repudiates all liability for the Indian debt. We are not merely refused the Imperial guarantee—the withholding of which our credit might perhaps survive—but we are forbidden to borrow even upon the credit of our own revenues.

Does it require an elaborate argument to prove that it is false economy in any country where money is worth in trade 20 per cent. per annum, to levy taxes therein for works of public improvement, when the Government may import capital for the purpose as freely as it pleases at 4 per cent.? India is your possession, and you cannot do better than invest your overflowing capital in the property. Her safety and wellbeing and your own, equally point to this conclusion; while, as the case now stands, every country in the world may come to you for assistance except India. Not one shilling are we allowed to borrow, but under special Act of Parliament, to be obtained only at the cost of a party demonstration in the House. The result is, that India may starve before English Ministers will help her. She is thus forced to construct her public works out of revenue, and there is a constant recurrence of a seeming, though not real, deficit in her accounts.

Now, Sir, this is not the result of misgovernment in India, but of your mischievous interference with our affairs. We do not ask you to be answerable for our debt—which, by-the-bye, I will show presently to be *your* debt, and not ours—but we do ask you to cease this unheard-of interference with our national credit. There is not an empire, or republic on the face of the earth that may not borrow as freely as it pleases in your money market, upon whatever credit it possesses; while India alone, of all nations and of all your colonies and dependencies, is shut out therefrom by your legislative wisdom. Do you think that the capitalist is not well able to see for himself whether the credit we offer him is sufficient? As if for the very purpose, moreover, of destroying our credit, you insist year after year upon our accounts being presented to the world in a shape utterly misleading, and most damaging to us. The English press is never tired of affirming that the Indian balance-sheet shows a chronic state of deficit, while there is not a balance-sheet in the world that will compare in respectability with our own, if you will but make it out as you take care to make out your

own balance-sheet. The fact is simply this, that our yearly accounts are made out upon a principle that renders it matter of mere caprice whether our deficit is one million or twenty millions. The ordinary revenues of the year are charged with an indefinite expenditure upon public works, the outlay upon which would be met in any other country by loans. It depends, therefore, upon the mere caprice of the man who happens to be the Finance Minister you have sent—in other words, upon his estimate of the public works expenditure of the year—whether there shall be a deficit in the accounts of one million or ten. Is it not a grievous wrong that our accounts should be annually presented to the world, in a shape to convey the impression that it is with difficulty we meet our current expenditure, when the fact is, that we have an immense surplus available year by year for investment in reproductive works?

For many years past, we have been contriving, not only to pay our way, but to spend from £6,000,000 to £8,000,000 sterling a-year upon public works in the country. This has been all done out of taxes, be it remembered. A vast proportion, about two-thirds of this outlay, has been on reproductive works, while it is all treated in the accounts as though it had been cast into the Dead Sea of current expenditure. I have been insisting upon this fact for years, and Mr. Laing recognised its truth when he told you in his pamphlet that “our large expenditure in public works is really a sinking fund admirably invested.” Well, whose fault is it that we have been able to spend no more? Is it *our* fault, or yours? Shut up to the narrow resources of our current income to meet the urgent wants of a vast empire,* we have done our best to overtake them, while you have done nothing but taunt us that we have not done more. Do you think it was a wise thing, after all, for Mr. Wilson to lay 20 per cent. import duties upon us, and an income-tax,* that the proceeds might be spent upon railways,

* I must not be misunderstood about this income-tax. I have not the slightest objection in principle to an income-tax in India, if only

and canals, and roads, when we could have borrowed as much money as we required, had we been allowed to do so, at 4 or 5 per cent. for the purpose. The great want of India is imported capital to quicken the languishing springs of her industry, while in your philanthropy and wisdom you dam up the stream of wealth that fertilises all lands but India, and which would flow to India also, if you would allow it.

But I have not yet done, gentlemen. If ever a Government was required to make bricks without straw, it is this unhappy Indian Government of ours. You insist upon our constructing what public works we require out of taxes; you refuse us all assistance in the shape of loans; you taunt us with the meanness of expenditure; and, last of all, abuse us for levying taxes at all in the country—for it really comes to that.

For against which of the Indian taxes have you not, at one time or another, raised a clamour? To-day Mr. Danby Seymour is here denouncing the land-tax, as an impost that crushes all enterprise out of the country. Mr. Dickenson has had his fling at our "abominable stamp-tax;" as for Customs duties, you "cannot away with them," while our opium and abkarree revenues are denounced by all the philanthropists of the land. What, in the name of common sense, then, is the Government to do? Was there ever perversity so deep in dealings with affairs so momentous? You carp at everything; you suggest nothing; you button up your pockets, and give us incessant abuse.

Against each of our resources, I say, in turn has all the

it be imposed for legitimate purposes. Mr. Wilson's income-tax was levied to meet a giant Public Works expenditure, and was, therefore, a plain act of confiscation. But I am not at all prepared to contend that it might not be wise and just to lower the salt-tax one rupee per maund, and to make up the deficiency by an income-tax. An income-tax for the current expenses of the State is just enough; for Public Works to improve the land, when the public have no longer any interest in that land, it is monstrous. The policy, or impolicy, of such a tax in India at all, is another question.—R. K.

force of uninformed clamour been brought to bear in this country. Twelve or fourteen years ago, a great outcry was got up against the salt-tax, which was denounced in every note of the gamut, from the shrill treble of "small economists," dogmatizing upon a state of matters of which they were ignorant, to the deep bass growling of the leading English journals. Many of you gentlemen must remember the torrent of abuse John Company had to endure from the lungs of honest John Bull, who had taken it into his head, at the suggestion of the Cheshire salt manufacturers, with Mr. D. C. Aylwin at their head, that the salt-tax was all that the land-tax is now represented by Mr. Danby Seymour to be. For half-a-century had the impression been cherished, that the salt-tax was "a great iniquity." The manufacture of the salt was "a monopoly," and a monopoly is a very odious thing. The tax was declared to be a species of poll-tax, and a poll-tax is a very odious thing. The effect of the tax was to deprive the poor man of the amount of salt absolutely necessary to keep his body from being shrivelled and dwarfed into the size of a monkey. And then those "wretched Molungees," whom the Moloch of a Government forced to manufacture the salt in the Soonderbuns—how much doleful lamentation was uttered by indignant philanthropists on behalf of the "miserable Molungees." Your very penny-a-liners almost became familiar with the name and woes of the class. Upon the whole, it required a good deal of courage to say a word in defence of the salt-tax, in the presence of non-official Englishmen, only twelve or fourteen years ago. It was at last found out that the tax was not so bad a tax after all, being about the only tax that reached the masses, while of the smallest possible amount to those whose means are in proportion small. It is a tax paid, moreover, in a manner that is, at least in appearance, voluntary, and levied in a way that is free from inquisition, and collected with less expense and greater certainty than perhaps any other could be. And so public opinion, better informed than it was, became so reconciled to the tax that its pressure has been

gradually increased with general approval, until the revenue we derive therefrom has reached the immense sum of £6,000,000. And is there nothing in all this suggestive of a doubt, that the present outcry against the Indian land-tax may be of no better order?

I care not whom it offends when I say that the agitation against the land-tax of India is begotten of selfishness and ignorance; an ignorance so disgraceful to the official men who share it, that its exhibition deserves the severest handling it may get. Had we not a right to expect that the very first step of the opponents of the tax would be a painstaking and exact inquiry into the pressure of the tax, upon the classes who are declared to be crushed by it? And yet there has not been a writer against the tax down to Mr. Danby Seymour and Mr. Dickenson to-day, that has not *assumed* that it is "a rack-rent of half the produce of the ryot's fields." Many of them have explicitly affirmed the statement, and it has been repeated from mouth to mouth, till it is now as generally believed as was the salt-tax ten years ago believed to be "a giant iniquity." Gentlemen, I do rejoice to be brought face to face this day with this folly, and however unpalatable these statements may be, I do trust that India may derive some benefit from them in the future.

The reforms that are required in the matter of our Public Works expenditure are plain. You must abandon the position that India shall not borrow, and in place of it encourage its Government to come freely to your capitalists for all the wants of that great empire. Its prosperity is *your* prosperity: and a wise and unselfish administration of its affairs will react upon the wealth of this nation in a way little hoped for now. Then there should be an immediate separation of the Public Works expenditure of the country, from the Budget Estimates of the year. Instead of jumbling up together our outlay upon railways and canals, with the cost of administering the laws of the country, the accounts should be separated at once and for ever.

Let our balance-sheet show every year what our real surplus is, and let an exact account be registered of every item of expenditure upon public works of a reproductive nature. The Indian Finance Minister of the day need have nothing to do, necessarily, with any outlay upon public works, except such as is legitimately chargeable to the current revenues of the year. This expenditure of itself is very heavy, comprising the cost of all repairs of existing works, civil and military buildings, &c. For the rest, we ought probably to organize a great Public Works Department in the country. And let us take care that it is not too centralised. The cavalier manner in which urgent applications from the Bombay and Madras Governors for money for the most necessary public works, have been treated must end. Calcutta must not be allowed to dogmatise upon what Bombay, or Madras, or the Punjab, shall do or shall not do. It has enough work before it in Bengal; let it stick to it. That some such changes as I have here hinted at must be inaugurated before public works in India will be prosecuted upon the right scale, and in the right way, I think there can be no doubt.

I have detained you too long already, gentlemen, but I must be allowed to take a hurried glance at our Railway expenditure in India, before I close. The total amount, then, expended upon our railway system, as far as it has gone, up to the close of 1865, is about £75,000,000, of which sum about £60,000,000 was contributed under the guarantee, and the remaining £15,000,000 advanced out of Indian taxes, in payment of the interest guaranteed to the shareholders and in railway exchanges. The total outlay, I say, upon the Indian railway system from its commencement down to this day, a period of seventeen years, is about £75,000,000 sterling, and towards this sum the capitalists of this country have contributed the greater part of the £60,000,000 raised under the guarantee. The nett amount of capital India has received, however, has been no more than £45,000,000, since £15,000,000 of interest and ex-

change have been returned to this country, out of taxes, in the payment of guaranteed interest and exchange. We have thus paid back to England £15,000,000, while we still owe her an undiminished debt of £60,000,000. All the *risks* of the enterprise are our own, and the investment, in so far as England is concerned, must be held to be a highly advantageous one. For a very large amount of this capital has been spent upon English industry. Of the £60,000,000 we owe, no less a sum than £22,000,000 was paid to English machinists, ironmasters, engineers, and shipowners, for permanent way, freight, rolling stock, &c., establishments, and how advantageous this arrangement has been to the country you, of course, are well aware. Your expenditure upon railway enterprise in India resolves itself, then, into this: that for the last seventeen years you have allowed the Indian Government to borrow, upon an average, £3,600,000 a-year, of which sum £1,400,000 a-year has been laid out on English goods, ships, &c.; nearly £1,000,000 a-year has been returned in the shape of interest, and exchange, because the system does not yet pay; and the nett balance, or a total sum of £23,000,000, has been actually expended in India itself. That is to say, the help which this great country, whose surplus accumulations of capital year by year are variously estimated at from £90,000,000 to £140,000,000 sterling, the help, I say, which it has rendered to India, amounts to the sum of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the wealth you hardly know what to do with! For this advance you have the most ample security, and a dividend of 5 per cent.

And the Government of this wealthy nation declares, in its wisdom, that the system of guaranteed loan has gone far enough, and must now be terminated. Well, with this expenditure of £75,000,000 out of capital and taxes, we have contrived in seventeen years to open about 3,300 miles of railway. I will now tell you what English gold did for the United States of America, in ten years only, from 1851 to 1861. Without a guarantee of any kind from its Government, then, you so freely offered your gold to

America, that they contrived to open with your help upwards of 19,000 miles of railways in the States in those ten years, or nearly 2,000 miles a-year; and you think you have done great things for us, in aiding us to construct about *two hundred*. Sir, we must invest capital in India on a very different scale from this, if we would reap the harvest of wealth that lies ready to our hand in that great country. Deal with India in the open-handed manner in which you deal with other lands, and you will reap a return therefrom such as you have now little conception of.

Well, you have now seen the total actual expenditure of English capital on railway enterprise in India. Allow me, in conclusion, to draw your attention to the abstraction you make of capital therefrom annually. At this moment, then, what are called the Home charges of the Indian Government do not fall short of six millions a-year. Now, I speak the language of sober earnestness when I say that there is hardly an item in those charges, that does not admit of question as to its justice, either in principle or in degree. I must not weary you, however; and I shall refer but to two or three particulars therein. I remark then, first, that in those charges there is a demand annually made for the sum of £3,000,000, in payment of interest on the debts incurred in the prosecution of the Affghan War, and in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny. Now I speak within the hearing of men who are quite able to verify what I say, when I affirm that the large sum of money thus claimed is taken from India every year, by no law but that of might. Will it be contended seriously that the Affghan War was entered upon in the interests of India, or that India had any voice whatever, either in its prosecution or its close? It was a purely English war, undertaken by English statesmen in the teeth of the rulers of India, and in purely English interests; and so mistaken and so guilty was that war, that it has come to be called proverbially "the *iniquitous* Affghan War."

And yet, though India had nothing whatever to do either with its inception, its responsibility, or its prosecution; and

though the East India Company protested earnestly against the whole affair; you have fastened the whole cost of it, namely, £1,000,000 a-year in perpetuity, upon the people of that country. Do you think that the terrible sufferings of 1857 cast no light upon this transaction? Already the sum abstracted from the people of India on account of that war, does not fall short of the whole amount of your boasted expenditure upon Indian railways. You are at the present moment taking £1,000,000 sterling a-year from India for the cost of that iniquitous war; and you mean to take it still. Do you think the lapse of twenty years takes off the disgrace of the proceeding? I do not stay to notice the miserable pretences upon which the interests of India were sought to be linked with that war. Suffice it to say that it cost, directly or indirectly, £20,000,000 to £30,000,000 before its last traces disappeared from the Indian balance-sheet, and that you have unjustly fastened a perpetual demand of £1,000,000 a-year upon the people of India for its conduct—and you take care that they pay it.

Once more, under this head (and I remark parenthetically that it would be easy to show that the whole Indian debt is really an English liability, and not Indian) I point your attention to the fact, that you are exacting £2,000,000 more every year from India, and mean to exact it in perpetuity, it seems, for the suppression of the Indian Mutiny. And yet, what fact in equity can be more certain, than that the cost of suppressing that outbreak, should be borne by those by whose misrule it was occasioned? Let it be well understood that there is no longer any controversy as to its causes. The English Government of the day was committed to a course of spoliation of high and low. On one pretext or another, our treaties with the native princes of the country were violated, that we might seize their possessions, while Enam commissioners were sweeping as with a besom all the private freeholds of the country into the Government treasuries. It was impossible all this while, remember, to secure a hearing for any remonstrance that came from India.

Every petition presented to either Lords or Commons was treated as so much waste paper; and when at last a rebellion occurred, you bound the whole cost of its suppression, to the last farthing, upon the shoulders of the people. But you reversed your policy, and signed judgment against yourselves for the debt in doing so.

What, I ask, had the loyal millions of Bombay, Madras, the Punjab, Sind, Nagpoor, to do with that rebellion, that they are now to pay its cost; while you, by whose misrule alone it was brought about, refuse to touch the burden with one of your fingers? Is it thus that this Christian people should govern the vast dependency whose finances are in its hands, as a trust? While you have been making your guaranteed outlay upon Indian railways of three millions a-year, Sir Charles Wood has been *drawing* three millions a-year to pay the interest upon debts, unjustly incurred in our name, because we are in your power. Do you think, if India was rightly represented in the British Parliament, this state of things would be allowed to last?

Before I dismiss this subject, let me ask your attention to a fact concerning the Mutiny debt, which is truly so disgraceful as to be all but incredible. It happened that a large part of this so-called debt of £40,000,000 was incurred just at the time when you were under the panic of a French invasion. There were no fewer than 100,000 troops in India at the period, the depôts of which, amounting to 22,000 men, were in this country. Well, all through that panic those depôts formed a most important part of your national defences, and your statesmen, and newspapers, comforted themselves with their presence here. Can you believe it possible, then, that the whole cost of their maintenance was thrown—as the cost of these depôts ever was thrown—upon the Indian Treasury, upon the pretext that the regiments to which they belonged were serving in India? Comment upon such a fact is superfluous. The cost of *your* defence was thrown upon the Indian ryot, and he is paying it to this day. And yet you are easy

under the impression that your rule of India is upright and commendable, and exactly what it ought to be.

I do not carry the subject further, or it would be easy for me to show that these so-called Home charges,* which have amounted in round figures to £150,000,000, since the commencement of the century, have been one of the chief causes that have retarded the progress of that country. India pays a heavy penalty, gentlemen, for the benefits of English rule. What the total capital annually abstracted from her under our giant system of *absenteeism* amounts to it is difficult to say; but it is heavy in the extreme, and tends terribly to her impoverishment. I need not tell you how different is the effect of taxes spent *within* the country in which they are raised, and taxes spent *without* it. It is the unavoidable misfortune of India that many millions a-year of her taxes, are sent therefrom to be expended in this country; and I cannot forbear the statement of my conviction that our national relations with that great empire are far from resting upon an equitable basis. The principle upon which all our financial relations with India have hitherto been conducted, is the assumption that England never had any interest in the acquisition of its rule, and has none whatever in its maintenance. I need not tell you how false that assumption is. A De Tocqueville, amongst foreigners, is lost in admiration of the fortune we possess in our great dependency, while the vulgar leaders of your press indecently threaten to "cut the Indian Empire adrift" rather than let her cost you one shilling. Do you not think, gentlemen, strong *prima facie* evidence exists against the equity of your rule, in the fact that you may search the records of your Exchequer through, and fail to find there a trace even of the ex-

* India owes much to Mr. Laing, as the first English statesman who has had the courage to animadvert boldly upon the character of our financial relations therewith; and I regret deeply that I am obliged to differ from him on any question. It was Mr. Laing's attitude towards the Home charges, I believe, that was the real, though not ostensible, origin of the quarrel that drove him from office.—R. K.

istence of your Indian Empire. You have unlimited control of our finances. There is no man to rise up in Parliament, and question the equity or the justice of the vast abstractions you are making, year by year, from the treasury of India, without check or hindrance of any kind. You do as you please with that treasury. You ever have done so. Every charge that you could connect, however remotely, with the *name* of India, you have cast upon her. Instead of a scrupulous regard to what equity and good faith suggested, and a careful attempt to apportion the cost of maintaining the connexion of the two countries between them, upon the principle that each should pay according to the benefits it derives therefrom, you have made India pay the whole; you are still making it do so; and you mean still to make it do so.

The time is coming, gentlemen, when interpellations upon this subject will reach you from the native mind of India itself. It is not for nothing that the young men of India are pressing through the Universities, you have established in its chief cities. Their voices are mute now, for they know not political warfare; but the time is coming when you will have to give an account to the sons of India, of the trust so long confided to your hands, and, as I in my conscience believe, so inequitably used. Remember, if your treatment of your other dependencies is right, then is your treatment of India shamelessly wrong; and I would, from the bottom of my heart, that you awoke to this fact of yourselves. It is enough for me, that I have made a deliverance of my own conscience upon this subject.

When I regard attentively the intense selfishness of our rule in India; our deliberate refusal to pay one shilling for the important benefits we derive from that rule; and remember that India is one of the poorest countries on the earth, whilst we are estimated to be the wealthiest, I cannot but have misgivings as to our future. I cannot but fear that what we are wrongfully withdrawing from that country, will be exacted of us, to the last far-

thing, in national rebuke, humiliation, and suffering. I speak the more unreservedly upon this subject, because I know how extensively deep religious feeling pervades the north of England, and because, we are told by high authority, that it is from Manchester that the great political impulses of the day are flowing.

I would suggest that Manchester should petition for a Select Committee of the House, to report upon the following questions :—

1. The propriety of declaring every Port in India a Free Port?
2. The propriety of extending the Permanent Settlement throughout India, as sanctioned by Sir Charles Wood's Dispatch of 1864?
3. The propriety of that Settlement in the North West Provinces?
4. The propriety of mixing up the vast Public Works Expenditure of India with its current Revenue accounts, and of compelling its Government to construct Public Works of a reproductive character, out of Taxes, instead of allowing it to borrow money for the purpose, as all other Governments do?
5. The character of our financial relations with India, and the principles on which they are based?

NOTE.

Shortly after the Conference, a letter commenting thereon appeared in the *Times*, signed "A Colonist," illustrating very perfectly the want of exact acquaintance with our affairs, which I allege against the colonist party generally. The writer remarks :—

The Government of India, while boasting that it possesses a source of revenue which other Governments have foolishly alienated, has never understood that the privilege of collecting the rent of the land entails upon it the obligation of fulfilling those duties of a landlord which elsewhere are performed by private individuals. While maintaining the theory that the land revenue is only the rent, it has never scrupled to use that revenue as a tax to defray the expenses of foreign wars, or to relieve the wealthy commercial inhabitants of great cities from the burden of paying their fair share of the general taxation of the country. As a general rule, none of the money taken from the land was, till lately, spent on the land, and consequently, the backward condition of Indian agriculture presented a close parallel to that of Irish agriculture in those good old days in which absentee landlords squandered in foreign countries the rents they received from their properties in Ireland. Even still it is considered a work of grace, and not of obligation, for the Indian Government to spend money on public improvements, such as roads and works of irrigation; and so little did Sir C. Trevelyan last year recognise what the Government owes to the land, that he actually abolished the income tax—the only direct impost to which the commercial millionaires of India, the men who benefit most largely by our rule, contributed—because he could use the land revenue to supply the gap thus created, instead of applying it to its legitimate purposes.

A day or two after this letter appeared, the *Bolton Chronicle* echoed the substance of its complaint as follows :—

If we want more cotton, and better cotton, and cheaper cotton, from India, we must have more roads, more navigable canals, and greater improvements to the navigation of existing rivers between the cotton districts and the coast. And here it is that the Government of India has signally failed in its duty. It is true we are told that during the last six years the grants for public works, chiefly roads, have been £30,000,000. It seems a great sum. But look to the different position in which the Government of India stands to the landowners and occupiers, to that which it holds in reference to the same classes in our own country. In England, if a new road has to be made, the owners and occupiers of land must subscribe for the improvement. But in India the Government may be called fairly the land-owner; it levies a land-tax which during the last six years has amounted to

£120,000,000. And we say it is bound in all honesty to expend that tax in the improvement of the land upon which it is levied. Let the cotton manufacturer stick to this one point—"You, the Government of India, receive £20,000,000 a-year of rent from the land; that is a sum you have no right to dispose of for the benefit of merchants, and for the improvement of towns, but which you should devote to the benefit of those who pay it.

Lastly, a greater than either the "*Colonist*" or the *Chronicle*—the *Times*—was insisting upon the same thing, a few months ago, in the following terms:—

It is true that a large sum of £5,890,000 is to be spent in the ensuing year on public works, but nearly as much, or £5,686,000, was spent in the past twelve months. A Government like that of India, which, taking into account the opium monopoly, derives more than half its income in its character of landowner, must every year be prepared to lay out considerable sums in public works. This has been done for many years past, and the revenue is now reaping the benefit of the expenditure. The present generation must do for its successors what its predecessors have done for it.

In substance, all these gentlemen agree that as the Government of India is the landlord of the country, and enjoys the rights of landlord, so must it be held answerable for the discharge of the landlord's duties: in other words, it is its duty to construct what works are necessary for the improvement of the land, out of the income which it derives therefrom. The extracts are replete with misstatements of fact on minor matters, to which I need not reply: but admitting for a moment that the Government of India *does* stand towards the soil in the relation which these gentlemen, erroneously, suppose, when or where in the world, I ask, was it ever yet held that a landlord ought not to be allowed to borrow money for the improvement of his estate, but should be compelled to devote thereto, the income he derives therefrom! The question raised by these gentlemen, and thus superficially treated, is vital to the wellbeing of India; and if the erroneous impressions conveyed by such writings are to govern our conduct in the matter of public works in India, the future of that great country will be indefinitely compromised.

The terms *lease*, *rent*, *landlord*, and *tenant*, as applied to the relations existing between the State and the land in India, are suggestive of so much error, that their use is greatly to be deprecated. A lease in India is not a lease, in the English meaning of the term; nor is the Government a landlord, nor the ryot a tenant, nor the land revenue

a rent ; and the assumption that the words so translated have the full meaning of their English renderings, is the parent of half the errors made in this country upon the subject of Indian finances. ●

In no part of India, does the Government stand towards the soil in the relation of landlord. Its rights as landlord (if it ever possessed them) were long since waived in favour of the cultivator. As a matter of fact, the Government of India never was the landlord ; it was simply entitled by immemorial usage to what was known as the *khirauj*—an impost that might, or might not, represent the true rent of the soil. This impost might legally extend to one-half the produce, but could not exceed that proportion ; while in practice only a third or a fourth was taken. In other words, the Commonwealth had a prescriptive right to share in the produce of the soil ; a share that might reach to one-half, but in practice seldom exceeded one-third.

Now, let it be well understood that this was the condition of things we found in India. We found that the Commonwealth had reserved a right from time immemorial to a certain proportion of the produce of the land. But the State had no right to the *soil* : it could not dispossess one tenant to put another in at a higher rental ; for the soil belonged to the occupier, who could do with it what he liked, so long as he paid the State share of the produce. When a man sold his land in those days, he sold it subject to the State claim upon it ; in other words, he sold a right to occupy and enjoy for ever two-thirds of its produce. The remaining third was not his to sell, and never was his, nor his fathers'. Whether the State share represented the true rent of the soil or not, would of course be an accident : I am inclined to believe it fell a good deal short of that rent as a rule. Well, this was the condition of things we found everywhere ; while at this moment we have everywhere lowered that *khirauj* almost to the point of abandonment. The land has risen so enormously in value within the last twenty years—mainly from the successful growth of new and valuable articles of export—that, instead of one-third, it is doubtful if we are taking one-twentieth of the produce as the State share. In other words, whatever our predecessors may have been, we have long since abandoned all claim to anything but a quit-rent of the soil.

Wisely or unwisely, we have abandoned, I say, to the cultivator that share in the produce which before we came, the Commonwealth

reserved for defraying the expenses of the Government. In so doing, we have of course conferred an enormously valuable property upon the cultivator, which neither he nor his fathers knew, and to which neither he nor they had the remotest title, or right. If, therefore, it ever was the landlord, the Government has long ceased to be so, having abandoned to the cultivator the whole margin of profit which lies between our light assessment and the true rental of the fields.

• Now, these are facts of which "A Colonist" is plainly ignorant. The belief still lingers everywhere, that the land revenue of India is "a rack-rent of half the produce." The truth is, a revolution has taken place in that country within the last twenty years, so vast that the experience and the writings of men who may have been "authorities" in 1845 are now simply misleading and dangerous. It is because of this that the proposal to settle the land-tax in perpetuity at its present amount, is so monstrous a folly. Just at the period when the land is doubling in value every five years, we are bidden to settle the land-tax in perpetuity. Take the case of a ryot holding a thirty years' lease, in the Bombay Presidency. The man has what is called a right of occupancy; and the "lease" is simply an assurance that the Government assessment shall not be raised for a generation of years. He can do what he likes with his land, for his right to occupy is heritable, and transferable, and perpetual. The State cannot oust him; all improvements upon the land are his for ever. He is simply liable at the end of thirty years to find the quit-rent he is paying somewhat increased, from a general edict falling upon the whole *talooka*; an edict ever preceded by careful inquiry. Where he is now paying a quit-rent of Rs.2 an acre, he may perhaps have to pay by-and-bye Rs.3. Who is the real landlord in these circumstances? The so-called tenant, who is allowed from generation to generation to enjoy the rent, or the so-called *landlord*, who does not enjoy it? So valuable a property are these leases, that they command the most fabulous premiums. Land is not to be bought in Western India at all. If we could get at the hoards of these men for the purpose of making the roads, and tanks, and canals, which they have too little enterprise to make for themselves, it might be good policy to tax them for the purpose, but to tax the *urban classes* for such works, while they are to have no interest in the profits arising from the outlay, is plainly monstrous. On this ground, have I ever condemned

the income-tax in India; because it was levied to sustain a great public works expenditure, and not to defray the current expenses of the State. If we settle the land-tax in perpetuity at its present amount, then is it certain that the Commonwealth should cease all expenditure upon public works for improving that land. All that the State is now taking from the land of India is a quit-rent, the whole proceeds of which go to defray the expense of administering the laws, and maintaining the military establishments. To undertake public works for improving the land, out of that quit-rent, or out of an income-tax upon the cities, is plainly preposterous. The State has already conferred upon the occupiers of land an enormously valuable property, which belonged of right to all classes in common. And we are now to add to the value of that property, it seems, by an indefinite outlay upon public works made out of taxes upon the non-agricultural classes.

SIR GEORGE COUPER

AND THE

FAMINE IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCES.

[*Being a revised reprint of certain Letters and Articles on the
Subject in the STATESMAN AND FRIEND OF INDIA.*]

Calcutta :

“STATESMAN” OFFICE: 3, CHOWRINGHEE.

1878.

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PREFACE.

THE appalling mortality attending the recent famine in the North-West Provinces has been shown beyond cavil by the *Statesman* to be directly attributable to the blindness and apathy of Sir George Couper's government, and to the total want of discretion with which he carried out, regardless of consequences, the policy which he believed would commend itself to the approval of the Government of India. Lord Lytton has shown more respect for public opinion than most of his predecessors, but it is too weak in India to compel the bureaucracy under which we live to acknowledge the fallibility of high officials, or the failure of measures which it has itself adopted or approved. To effect this, we must appeal to the public opinion of England. So vital are the issues raised in the following controversy, so necessary is it that the late scandal in the North-West should be exposed and condemned, and that at the same time, the essential, though unintentional, cruelty of the famine policy imposed by the agency of Sir Richard Temple on Madras, and which under Sir George Couper has permitted half a million of people to die of hunger, should be clearly demonstrated—that we deem it our duty to ask the verdict of the Home public upon the matter.

Early in February last, when the Indian public, and even the local Government, were yet in ignorance of the terrible mortality from famine that was raging in the North-West Provinces, Mr. Knight had occasion to go to Agra. Dr. Cornish, the Sanitary Commissioner of Madras, had

just preceded him, and when Mr. Knight arrived he received a letter from Dr. Cornish, pointing out to him the unmistakable symptoms of famine among the people. What he saw with his own eyes and heard from all quarters, official and unofficial, more than confirmed Dr. Cornish's statements. Mr. Knight thereupon wrote to the *Statesman* his first letter on the subject, and thus, in the middle of February, the public was for the first time made aware that a severe famine had been raging, almost without remark, in the North-West since November. Attempts were made through certain newspapers and by the publication of official documents to cast discredit on his statements. This, and the pitiable condition of the people, led him to write two other letters to the *Statesman*, the contents of which were so damaging to the government of Sir George Couper, that the latter felt it incumbent on him to address a defence of his policy to the Government of India. The Government of India rashly accepted the defence, and approved Sir George Couper's course; and to pacify public opinion published the official correspondence. By this time Mr. Knight was back in Calcutta, and was thus able to deal exhaustively with the questions in dispute, in the editorial columns of the *Statesman*. By means of the mortuary returns, published by the Government, and other official papers to which he had access, he was able, by official evidence, to prove his charges and to expose the flimsiness of Sir George Couper's defence. At the same time corroborative testimony streamed daily into the office of the *Statesman* from a host of correspondents in the North-West, including not only missionaries and other non-official gentlemen of position, but also many officials in Government service. The following pages contain Mr. Knight's letters, and the official papers in defence of the Government, with the

Statesman's editorials and important extracts from the correspondence referred to. As much as possible has been done by compression and re-arrangement to present the controversy to the public in a convenient form. To attain due method and brevity, it would have been necessary to write an original pamphlet; but the importance of the subject is such that it is hoped that defects of style and method, inseparable from a reprint of this kind, will not be allowed to weigh with the critic against facts of so lamentable an order as are here disclosed.

We lay the appeal before the Home public, because the horrible scandal which it discloses is simply the culmination of the reactionary policy towards these calamities that has been begotten of Sir Richard Temple's guilty extravagancies in 1874. Down to the Orissa famine, it was the accepted belief of the Government that our one danger in these calamities was the 'doing too much' for the people. As there are no poor laws in India, and no provision of any kind for the destitute, every famine encountered under our rule had been attended by an appalling mortality. The dreadful sufferings of the people in Orissa (1866-67) reached the ears of the English public, and the Commission that was appointed to enquire into that calamity produced a report that it was supposed and believed would change the entire attitude of the Government towards these calamities in the future. But two short years afterwards, the Rajpootana famine occurred, and a million and a half of people were again consigned to death, by ignoring the Orissa Commission as if it had never existed. The district officers were again warned to be sure 'they did not do too much,' and it ended, as usual, in doing nothing. Sir John Strachey was Lieutenant-Governor of the North

West at the time, and it was he, undoubtedly, who struck the key-note of our course in this new calamity.

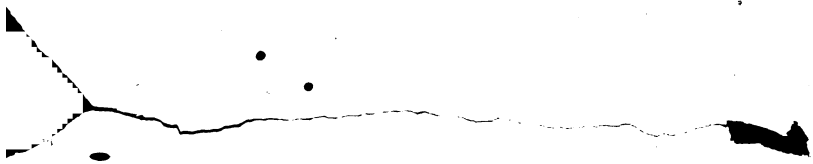
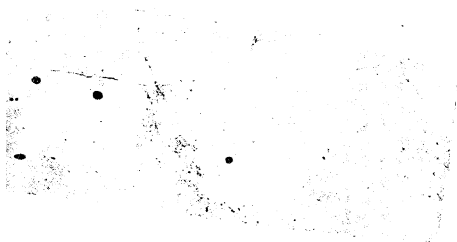
Strange to tell, this dreadful famine in Rajpootana excited no remark in England at all, but the Anglo-Indian press did its duty. The *Friend of India*, on the one side of India, and the *Times of India*, followed by the *Indian Economist*, on the other, spoke out in terms of indignant passion upon the subject, and a great change came over men's mind in India, as to the spirit in which these calamities needed to be met. It will be the lasting praise of Earl Northbrook—an otherwise feeble ruler—that the duty of the Government towards the people in time of famine, had taken absolute possession of his mind. Had he but been wise enough to have put the power of the Supreme Government behind Sir George Campbell, when the Behar famine confronted us in 1873-74, Sir George would have stereotyped as a guide for all time, the course to be pursued. But Lord Northbrook was jealous of his great Lieutenant, and insisted upon his retiring in the midst of the famine, that he might put Sir Richard Temple in his place. To this unhappy mistake, we owe everything that has followed. Without a conviction upon any subject and equally ready to make a famine where there is none, or to shut his eyes to the calamity when raging around him, Sir Richard Temple's wild extravagance of expenditure became a scoff and by-word in the country. He spent six or seven millions sterling, when two would have been more than ample, and made a famine everywhere to sustain the wild estimates he had himself forced upon the district officers, against their remonstrances.

A reaction of course was inevitable, and when famine again loomed upon us in Bombay and Madras, in 1876-77,

Sir John Strachey, who had become Finance Minister, rehabilitated the old policy once more, *with Sir Richard Temple as the instrument to give effect to it*. The old delusion was on its feet stronger than ever—that our danger lies ‘in doing too much,’ while the Behar famine, *in which not a life was lost*, was never named but to be scoffed at, because of Sir Richard Temple’s guilty folly in connection with it.

Every one knows how total has been the failure of the Strachey-Temple policy imposed in the last eighteen months upon Madras, while the facts disclosed in the following pages as to the famine in the North-West show the culmination of this reaction, in Sir George Couper’s inhuman course. We have tried to be as brief as we could, where a volume would be necessary to explain the exact position to the English mind. We send forth the pamphlet with deep reluctance, and only because we feel it to be our duty to do so.

CALCUTTA, June 1878.



FAMINE IN THE NORTH-WEST.

MR. KNIGHT'S LETTERS TO THE "STATESMAN."

I.

AGRA, *February 15th*, 1878.

SIR,—It is with real distress that I attempt to awaken the Imperial Government to the fact that we are at this moment in the midst of actual famine in the North-West Provinces, and that the fatal propensity of our officials to conceal from themselves and from the Government the extent of the distress, and the real sufferings of the people, will result—indeed, is already resulting—in a terrible mortality from starvation. That there may be no mistake as to my meaning, I affirm plainly that masses of the labouring poor are being slowly starved to death in these provinces, and I fear the statement is as true concerning Oudh and Rohilkund as of the districts of which Agra is the centre. No one will suspect me, I hope, of pretending to be more humane, or more clear-sighted, than the great body of honorable and able men who constitute the Civilian executive of these provinces. No one in India has a higher appreciation than I have of the claims of the Service to which they belong upon the admiration and the confidence of their countrymen; but there is unhappily a fatal Service tradition amongst them upon this subject of famine. A few years ago, the tradition was everywhere accepted that it was idle to suppose that the Government could charge itself with the responsibility of saving the people alive in time of famine. The Government could perhaps do something to mitigate the sufferings of the people, but not much. It might, in extremity, suspend the collection of the land

revenue, or at the last moment open relief works, and finally give some assistance to private movements for doling out a daily ration to the infirm, the aged, and the very young, just sufficient to sustain life. And that was all. To hope to do more than this, was deemed visionary and quixotic, nay, contrary to the 'laws of political economy.' That famine is one of those calamities that fall under the same category as war, and that the responsibilities of the Government in encountering it are to be measured only by its powers, is now an established conviction; but it has been contested at every step of its progress, by this 'tradition' of the Service. Not a Government resolution, nor circular order on the subject, was ever issued down to 1869, that was not couched in a tone of warning to the district officer to be sure that he did not do too much. The great thing to aim at was *not* the mitigation of the peoples' sufferings, but as small a drain as possible upon the exchequer; the first care consequently in famine was care for the treasury. The people of course must suffer—suffer terribly. The great thing was to see that the treasury did not suffer, or suffered as little as possible. That famine must be encountered in the spirit in which a nation enters upon the calamity of war, and that the Government stands or falls by the success or failure of its operations, is a conviction to which we do lip-service readily enough, but which has never yet dethroned the official tradition.

The Government *wishes* to believe that the people can pull through without assistance, and that their sufferings, if not imaginary, are at all events exaggerated by the zeal of officers who are wanting in judgment, and whose extravagance in representing matters to their superiors, or indiscretion in "writing to the papers," should be repressed as only mischievous and embarrassing. So well understood is it that the Government does not look with favour upon anything like strong representations of the peoples' sufferings, that probably no officer ever sits down to call attention to them, without a distinct effort to bring his style down to the official level that is recognized as the right standard. What the Government *wishes* to believe is of course well known to the entire district executive, and the art of minimizing the sufferings of the people is practised, I believe unconsciously, by nineteen officials out of every twenty who are moving in their very midst.

I now warn the Government that this fatal art is being practised to a dangerous extent at this moment in these provinces. It is not want of humanity, but the delusion that, with wheat at 11 seers the rupee, we must *expect* the very poor to die—it is this that produces the apathy with which the widespread starvation of the people is being watched by the executive. Three-fourths of the people, even on our so-called relief-works, are slowly but surely starving to death. Wheat, jowaree, and dhall at 10½ to 11 seers the rupee, and a daily wage of 9 pie for women and 1 anna for men coolies! *It is simply death by slow torture*, and calls for any indignation you may express upon it. And now observe the results of this so-called relief, communicated in a private letter to myself by a very high medical authority* who passed through Agra a week ago.

AGRA, Sunday, 10th February.

"I did not expect to meet with any evidence of famine in this part of India, but on my way to the *Taj* yesterday, I stopped and inspected a number of the working gangs on the famine relief-works, and this morning I have been into the poor-house where the worst cases are brought in.† In regard to the people on relief-works, they are generally in a worse condition than our working gangs in the South were at this time last year. *Their appearance betrays a long course of under-feeding.* The dirty, hard, dry skins and blue gums indicate a deteriorated state of health that is certain to end in high mortality. At the poor-house during the few minutes I remained, *four miserable creatures were brought in on doolies*, and the condition of the inmates is generally very bad. I understood the man in charge to say that *87 persons had died there in January, the average daily strength being from 200 to 300.* I have seen none of the local magnates, nor do I know what views are entertained in regard to the extent of the distress. All that I can say is, that the misery *from chronic starvation* amongst the people on the relief-works and in the poor-house, and wandering about the town, is very real; and that the present prospects of famine are very much what they

* Dr. Cornish, Sanitary Commissioner of Madras.

† It has been stated since that this was really a hospital, but as Dr. Cornish calls it a place "where the worst cases were brought in," the name makes little difference.

were in Madras a year ago. Only in this particular is the N.-W. better off, that you have promising crops of wheat, barley, and dhall, which will come into market in two months, whereas in our case last February, we had no prospect of harvest under six or seven months. The district jail I was unable to see, but Dr. Tyler informs me that his numbers are double the average, and this of course indicates distress in the district.

"I have no doubt that Agra receives the waifs of Jey-pore and surrounding districts, and that there is a concentration of misery about here, just as occurred in all our large towns in Madras; but from the very little that has been said in regard to the distress here, I should be inclined to think that there was *an unwillingness to admit the existence of actual famine*, and that it may burst rather unpleasantly on the authorities if the growing crops should turn out unfavourably. The early symptoms of famine are quite unmistakable to those accustomed to witness them, and I have no hesitation in saying that they exist in the relief-workers near Agra."

The italics in this letter are mine, and I earnestly beg the attention of the Government to the facts remarked by the writer. The people are being slowly starved by us, while we nurse the belief that we are protecting them from this last extremity of suffering. Let the reader reflect for a moment upon 87 deaths in one month, in a single poor-house, with an average of 200 to 300 inmates. I implore the attention of the Government to these disclosures. What is wanted in our district officers is *not* humanity, *not* pity for such sufferings—but their deliverance once for all from the miserable delusion that it is the public will, or the wish of the Government, that our relief measures should simply mean a horrible process of prolonging a man's death over six weeks of starvation on a Temple ration, instead of cutting his misery short by keeping him without food for six days. It is not in the Agra districts alone, that this terrible state of things exists, and exists apparently without the knowledge of the Government at all. I am urged by post this morning to go to Bareilly, to Budaon, to Shahjehanpore, to see the real state of matters, as the "officials are doing what they can to conceal the gravity of the state of affairs" from the Government.

R. KNIGHT.

This letter called forth a reply from Dr. Hilson, Civil Surgeon of Agra, in the form of a letter to the Collector, in which he argued that Dr. Cornish had not had time to ascertain the facts accurately, and that his account of the distress was very much exaggerated. It was probably in consequence of the same letter that the Secretary to Sir. George Couper's government addressed a communication to the Government of India on the 28th of February, in which the existence of severe distress was admitted, but an attempt was made to show that the Government of the North-West had made adequate arrangements to meet it in every district, with the exception of Rai Bareli. The following paragraph, while describing the sufferings of the people, reveals, in the lines italicised, complete ignorance, even at that time, of the great mortality among the people :—

6. It was intimated at the time that, though the rainfall of October had for the time saved these Provinces from distress amounting to famine, a considerable part of the population would inevitably be reduced to sore straits in the interval between the sowing and the ripening of the crops, and this prediction has been only too fully verified. The copious rainfall in December and January was not an unmixed blessing, for it deprived the labouring classes of the work they would otherwise have obtained in irrigating the crops; and the general failure of the *khurreef* grains, on which they ordinarily subsist, and which have been less abundant in the markets than wheat or barley, and quite as dear, deprived them as well of their usual food. The result has been that, unable to obtain their usual work, and with the grains on which they ordinarily depend for food selling at famine rates, the large class of day-laborers have been in a great measure compelled to eke out their subsistence by eating the green leaves of sarson, gram, and other plants. These remarks apply chiefly to the Agra and Rohilkhund Divisions, the greater part of Oudh, and parts of the Benares Division. The distress was much aggravated by the quite abnormal cold which came upon us so very suddenly and unexpectedly after the rain which fell in the first part of January. In ordinary years the poorest classes have abundance of straw for their bedding, and are thus kept warm at night when the cold is most severe; but this year, when in some places even the thatch has been pulled off the houses to feed the cattle, they were unable to get this auxiliary to their scanty clothing, and the cold acting on frames already enfeebled by insufficient nourishment has undoubtedly produced a mortality considerably in excess of the usual rate at the present season of the year, *although it may be questioned whether it will not be found hereafter that the comparative immunity from cholera and fever which, owing apparently to the drought, the Provinces have enjoyed during the past year, will not compensate for the losses caused by insufficient food and clothing, and make the mortality generally little if at all, higher than in an ordinary year.* The deaths have been most numerous amongst the class of wandering and professional beggars.

We quote also the following passages because they embody the main excuse that has been put forward by the

North-West Government, for the dreadful mortality in these districts :—

10. In the Rohilkhund Division generally the laborers who are in distressed circumstances are represented to have shown great reluctance to come to the relief-works, preferring to sit idly at their homes when they found they were required to do a fixed task. This apathy has undoubtedly tended to increase the numbers in the poor-houses, as admission could not be refused when they had become too feeble to work, and must have starved if they were not admitted. It was stated also that not a few who, on being discharged from the poor-house, were sent to a relief work ran away. * * *

11. As it appeared that one of the objections made to laboring on a relief-work was that the task exacted was somewhat beyond the powers of some of the people by reason of their already enfeebled state, it was at once reduced to an amount which such people could be fairly expected to perform. But the chief difficulty which the local authorities have had to contend against is the reluctance of the people to give any equivalent at all for their food in the shape of work. They say the "Sirkar fed us for nothing in 1868," and they cannot understand why they should not be similarly favored now. As soon as they found that work was expected from them, they hied to their homes. This impression and its consequences are, of course, much to be deprecated ; but the local officers were instructed to use all the influence at their command to bring the people to a sense of what was due from them to Government, as well as what was due from Government to them.

The concluding paragraph contained the following sentence :—"It is unquestionable that there has been, and still is, very severe distress ; but everywhere the arrangements appear to be such, that His Honor believes no man need die of starvation." How greatly His Honor was deluded, will be seen when we come to deal with the mortuary returns.

The Government of India, in replying to this communication, declared itself satisfied that Sir G. Couper's arrangements had, "on the whole," been "timely and sufficient," but called for a report on the rate of wages given on relief-works,—a point to which Sir G. Couper's Secretary had made no allusion. A report was accordingly furnished, which, however, it is unnecessary to produce here, as the nominal wage system will be found set forth in Sir G. Couper's defence. The rate actually paid on several of the works was, as will be seen, very far below the nominal rate.

After waiting to see all that could be said in reply to his first letter, Mr. Knight again addressed the Editor of the *Statesman*, exposing in stronger terms than before the mismanagement of the famine.

II.

AGRA, 29th March, 1878.

SIR,—I have purposely delayed noticing the strictures that have been made upon my letter, published in your columns of the 19th ultimo, concerning the mortality from starvation in these provinces during the last few months, that I might see all that had to be said against it. My letter I presume it was that gave rise to the correspondence on the subject between the local Government of these provinces and the Government of India, that was made public in your columns a few weeks ago; while it has been honored, I find, by a leading article in the *Englishman* of the 12th instant, and by a letter from the Civil Surgeon of Agra to the Collector of the district, that found its way into the *Pioneer* about a fortnight ago.

* * * * *

Your contemporaries cannot but know the fact that there has been an appalling mortality in these provinces since November last, nor can they be ignorant, I think, that it is neither old age, nor disease, nor epidemic of any kind, that has caused this ghastly death-roll, but—starvation. *The people have died of hunger by tens of thousands in these provinces since November last.* They were so dying all through December, January, and February *without a relief-work open anywhere*; and when public attention is called to the horrible fact, instead of joining me in the demand for enquiry as to *how* this mortality could have occurred, in presence of a District Executive supposed to be charged with its prevention, your contemporary (the *Englishman*) opens his editorial columns to a most untruthful official apology which pooh-poohs the whole subject, and which is allowed to assume the form of an independent editorial assurance that Mr. Knight had made most erroneous statements on the subject. According to your contemporary, some trifling distress had been experienced, but it was in no way attributable to Executive incapacity or want of foresight. The wording of my letter ought, I think, to have shown everyone how desirous I was to attribute as little blame as possible to the Executive, while stating firmly that there was actual famine in the provinces, and that a systematic effort was being made by our district officers to conceal its existence from the

Government, and even from themselves. Both the local journals, *Pioneer* and *Delhi Gazette*, were silent upon the subject, or were Government apologists according to their wont; while the *Englishman* publishes as an independent editorial an official apology, the authorship of which is very well known, contributed from Agra. Whatever may be thought of such journalism by others, it is a long way removed from my own conception of the true functions of the Indian Press. Had your contemporary made any enquiry into the facts, he would have known how necessary it was to receive with caution every official assurance on the subject.

Dr. Hilson's letter hardly calls for notice from myself, as it is in the main a simple expression of his professional opinion that the physical condition of the labourers on the relief-works in Agra itself, in the early part of February, was far from being indicative of such lamentable under-feeding, as Dr. Cornish declared it to be. The impression which Dr. Hilson's letter is likely to convey seems to me an unfortunate one in the interests of improved administration; as it is impossible that Dr. Hilson should not know that there has been a very appalling mortality in these provinces in the last three months, or that he should be ignorant of its real cause. The tilt against Dr. Cornish as to the physical condition of the relief labourers in Agra serves only to divert attention from the terrible fact in which we are so much interested, namely, the starvation of the people. The past cold season has been a particularly healthy one. There has been neither fever, nor cholera, nor epidemic of any kind to carry off the people; and yet the mortality has been appalling. The people have perished by tens of thousands of starvation; that, and nothing else. I do not feel called upon to decide whether Dr. Hilson or Dr. Cornish has given the truer professional diagnosis of the condition of the people on the relief-works at last opened in this city. It is enough for me to have seen with my own eyes, the truly horrible condition of crowds of people, *past* work altogether; and to see that the official *Gazette* discloses a death-rate throughout the provinces in December and January last, of more than double the normal ratio. Nothing is farther from my intention or wish than the fastening of a reproach upon our district officers. What I am anxious to do, is to show that we have not yet learned

that we must encounter famine in a different spirit altogether from that which still traditionally prevails in the Civil Service, if we are to encounter it successfully. I will recur to the subject with your permission in a second letter; and I leave it to the public to say whether such "opposition" to the Government, as this letter expresses, is desirable and necessary or not.

R. KNIGHT.

III.

AGRA, 30th March 1878.

SIR,—In my letter of yesterday I endeavoured to dispose of all that is personal in the discussion which my letter of the 19th ultimo has provoked in the columns of the *Englishman* and the *Pioneer*. I pointed out that the reply to my letter in the former journal was simply an official apology sent from this station as a contribution to its columns, and was in no sense an independent editorial judgment upon the matter, although it was made to assume that form in your contemporary's columns. Had the *Englishman* made any attempt to ascertain for itself what the condition of the people really was, and what the attitude of our district officers had been in presence of their distress, it would have known how misleading was the apology, and how absolutely true was my complaint that the Government views with displeasure all attempts of its district executive to depict the sufferings of the people in their true magnitude and intensity. I purposely preferred the charge against the Government in general terms only, but insisted on the fact that our district officials are too apt to minimise the sufferings of the people. The result in the present case has been an appalling mortality from starvation. The local officials were slow to open their eyes to the real extent of the people's sufferings, the local Government loving to have it so; and the result has been the death of tens of thousands of the poor from sheer starvation. Had there been any true insight into the condition of the people, or any just reflection upon their circumstances, the administration of these Provinces would have been carried on from October last with the utmost watchfulness, guided by a reasonable forecast of their

sufferings, and accompanied by the adoption of relief measures, to the absence of which the dreadful mortality of December, January, and February is directly attributable. Every one knew that the *khurreef* harvest had failed absolutely, and that these Provinces, at the end of September, resembled nothing but a vast desert. Not a drop of rain had fallen for months; not a blade of grass was to be seen anywhere; and the people were looking death in the face, both for themselves and their cattle. At this terrible juncture, and when all hope had forsaken them, the clouds suddenly gathered blackness, and a heavy and continuous downpour of rain occurred in the first week of October; but for this Providential and abnormal rainfall, it is hard to see how either man or beast could have been saved alive. Not only had the great *khurreef* harvest of grain and forage perished, but all hope of the *rubbee* crop, now happily being reaped, was also gone. The parched condition of the soil had made the *rubbee* sowings impossible. The floods of rain that drowned the parched fields in October were a veritable reprieve from death for the people and their cattle; but the Government made the fatal mistake of supposing that this unusual rain had redeemed the Provinces from all danger. It had done nothing of the kind, as a very little reflection should have shown every one. The *khurreef* and grass and forage of the year were lost beyond redemption, and all that these most timely rains did for the people was to renew in them the hope of a spring harvest, and give immediate employment in the fields to the mass of agricultural labourers who had been without work for many months, at a period when food was at famine rates. The rainfall emptied the relief-works at once. Within a few days they were all deserted, the people hurrying to their homes and villages to prepare and sow their lands for the *rubbee*. Now it ought to have been distinctly foreseen by the Government that when these sowings were completed, and the usual lull came in the demand for field labour, it would be necessary to re-open the relief-works to save the day-labourer alive. This forecast seems to have been absolutely wanting, and the delusion was everywhere nursed that all need of Governmental assistance was at an end. The impoverishment of the people through the total loss of their grain-crops, and the famine prices of grain, had made the condition of the day-labourer so critical, that it was necessary to watch

it with the utmost care. All thought of any such need seems to have been banished. Every relief-work in the Provinces was closed at the very moment when, as events have clearly shown, it was necessary to open them everywhere, if the people were not to perish. The winter rains that fell so seasonably in December and January, and upon which the Government congratulated itself so much, aggravated the danger of the labourer by superseding all necessity of irrigating the fields. Is it not amazing that even so simple a reflection as this seems not to have presented itself to the official mind? The more favourable the season showed itself for the actual proprietor of the fields, the more heavily did the scarcity press upon the day-labourer, who was reduced to half-work, when food was at famine rates. No Government can be carried on by steam; while a Government with such masses of the poor dependent upon it as our own, can hope to be administered successfully, only by constant reflection and the most watchful care. And the charge against Sir George Couper's administration is, that it showed no prevision and made no forecast of danger, in circumstances that urgently demanded both. The policy resorted to was to drive away the people who remained upon the relief-works, by successively lowering the rate of wage, until the Temple 'ration' was thrown into the shade altogether by the adoption, in these districts, of a scale of 6 chittacks of flour and one of dhal per day.* Is it any wonder that the people dreaded to resort to the works, as Sir George Couper says they did, when resort to them meant slow starvation? I believe I am stating the fact when I say that the people were driven from the relief-works, by the inhumanity which was simply starving them thereon. In Agra itself, the wages were 6 chittacks of flour and one of dhal per day, down to the last week in January. From alarm at the terrible mortality reported from all quarters, the rate has since been raised to 10 chittacks of flour and 2 of dhal. Is not the alternative clear—that we are either grossly extravagant now, or were starving the people before? If you can see any escape from this alternative, give Sir George Couper the benefit of it: I see none. The notion that seems to have been acted upon was, that the keeping of relief-works open

* 1 Chittack = 2 ounces.

at all after the October rains fell, was a benevolent folly ; and so the people were to be starved off them. With what success this policy was attended, the frightful death-rate of the Provinces during December, January, and February has shown but too clearly. It is on these grounds that I declare our policy in dealing with these calamities to be a distinct failure. The dread of doing too much still haunts the official mind in all departments, and until this evil tradition has been got rid of, we shall never see famine encountered in the right spirit. But Sir George Couper has reviewed his own administration in the letter to the Government of India of the 16th February, lately published in your columns ; and instead of an admission of the incapacity that has resulted in so frightful a mortality as the *Gazette* discloses, he gets credit for the "vigor and foresight" which have marked his operations. I venture to say, that nine-tenths of the officers who have been concerned in this matter during the last few months, will agree with me that Sir George Couper's action was everywhere "too late." There is ample official evidence of the fact, but it has been suppressed. It is not primarily a question between the public and the Government, as the *Pioneer* would make out, but one between Sir George Couper and his own officers. A small number of men in the N.W. P. hold no doubt the traditional Civilian view, that everything has been done in the wisest and best way possible ; but there is a large majority of men of ability and insight, to whom the events of the last two months have been a real awakening to the fact that our administration has been a ghastly failure. There has been a real awakening, I say, among the officers of this Government. The chords of their humanity have been keenly touched. Surrounded by the dying and the dead, they have sent in appeal after appeal to their superiors in every possible tone—angry, piteous, sarcastic, economical, and sanitary. When, as sometimes has happened, they were answered with cold denial and disbelief, sometimes with censure and punishment, they have learned a lesson which only a great calamity could teach, and, in common with Israel of old, have at last seen that their gods are of stone, that they see not, neither do they hear. I am not about to criticise in any detail the defence which the local Government has put forward, as I do not wish to "set a-going," to use its

own classic language, a prolonged controversy on the subject, for none is needed. There is no dispute about the facts. Every one capable of reflecting at all must have known well that, after the failure of the *khurreef*, there would be a famine in these Provinces from December to March, and that there was imminent danger of it lasting from September 1877 to September 1878.

Providence mercifully ruled that the lesser calamity only should fall upon us, but so little prevision of it was there, that the Government closed generally what relief-works were in hand, just when there was most need for them, and when the mortality was beginning to be very heavy. Some officers resisted, I believe, the pressure that was put on them, and poor-houses for those totally unable to work were kept open, I believe in Rohilkhund, *i.e.*, one division out of ten; but relief-works were closed even in name everywhere.

In point of fact there never were any relief-works worthy of the name, till about the 20th January, and no works sufficient for the people's need till the middle of February. Overwhelming proofs can be produced of the fact, not only for the Rai Bareli district, where failure is admitted, but also in districts in which success is supposed to have attended the "vigour and foresight" so idly claimed for the local Government. Practically, there were no measures taken to meet the sufferings of the people, on an adequate scale. As a fact, they were preposterously inadequate; and the result is that the mortality of the Provinces has been double and treble that of ordinary seasons. Hunger alone has killed twice as many people for months together, as old age, fever, cholera, natural causes, and decay combined; and if this shows vigour and foresight in the administration, I should like to know what apathy and blindness mean. The defence put forward by the Government of Sir George Couper, is only a series of mis-statements. I pass over some of the fatuous absurdities with which it abounds, as that "early grain was coming into the market" in the week ending 16th February; that the mortality would "be little if at all higher than in ordinary" years; that the "large class of day-labourers had eked out their subsistence by eating green leaves," &c., to come to the main defence, which is that the people would not come to the relief-works. "The chief difficulty is the reluc-

"tance of the people to give any equivalent at all for "their food, in the shape of work." "They say, 'the "Sircar fed us for nothing in 1868,' and as soon as "they found that work was expected from them, they "hied to their homes." I do not believe that any officer whatever, who had practical experience of these relief-works, would confirm this statement in its entirety.

In the Agra Municipality alone, there were 23,000 on the works in February, in spite of a very low scale of pay and continuous labor, Sundays and holidays, from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. The poor creatures were often not paid and dismissed till near 6 P.M. That of the tens of thousands on the works, a proportion were idle is no doubt true; but is it any wonder that many forsook these works and returned to their huts to die amongst their children, when neither blankets, nor shelter, nor sufficient food were obtainable in the cruel and bitter "abnormal cold" of the season? I affirm positively that the vast majority of these poor creatures, in spite of the repellent character of the works and of their associations, were, if not eager, still quite willing to use the strength left them, in performing the task exacted of them, where they were sheltered and fed. When, therefore, Sir George Couper apologises for the failure of his administration, by the broad, unqualified statement that the people were unwilling to work, I say that nine-tenths of his own officers would declare the statement untrue. Thousands of the children have been sold by the people in their extremity for a little food, or given away by their starving parents, and their homes made desolate, while the prisons have been crowded with poor creatures who have sinned only in their sore need. What are we to say of the gaunt despairing mother who, babe in arm, leaped into the well, and whose life, but not the babe's, was saved, and whose plea when tried for murder was, "I was dying of hunger, and could not leave my child"? What of the husbands who flung their girl-wives into ponds, that they might not see them die? Depend upon it, we have a lesson to learn from this famine, and it is one that we have not yet learned—to meet these calamities in the right spirit. They will never be surmounted, until we meet them with the promptness and resolution with which we brace ourselves up for the calamity of war. We failed in Madras lamentably; we have now failed here, with far less excuse, and to acquit Sir George Couper's

administration of the blame is impossible to those who know the facts.

R. KNIGHT.

P.S.—Let your readers bear in mind the fact that what little has leaked out in the press touching this famine, has appeared in the columns of the *Calcutta Statesman*. The daily papers in Agra and Allahabad have maintained a servile silence on the subject, knowing it to be unwelcome to our rulers.

R. K.

• THE MORTUARY RETURNS.

THE reference in the foregoing letter to the "frightful mortality during December, January, and February," was followed by an examination of the official mortuary returns, in the editorial columns of the *Statesman*. In introducing a few quotations on this subject, a word of explanation is necessary. The official papers speak of the mortality in the provinces under Sir George Couper's government, as 'double or treble' the ordinary rate of the season. Bad as this would be, it gives no just idea of the facts. The deaths were six to eight and even ten times as numerous as in ordinary years. The mistake arises from extending the averages to the entire province. We must look into the returns from the *famine tracts* only, to understand what the sufferings of the people really were. It is the returns from the Rohilkhund Division, from the Oonao Division, from the Agra Division—that we are concerned with. In Rohilkhund, the mortality was from six to eight times the ordinary rates. We have also to remember that registration in India is so imperfect that the *actual* mortality was, in all human likelihood, far in excess of the rates shown by the returns, terrible as they are.

We shall now quote from the *Statesman* of the 22nd of April:—

The official mortality returns disclose the appalling fact that 138,758 deaths occurred in the North-West Provinces in February last, against but 43,999 in the same month of the preceding year. We wish to blame no one for this dreadful state of matters, but we insist upon the necessity of its being distinctly known, that men may ponder what it means. For three successive months—December, January, and February—the death-rate in these unfortunate provinces was as follows:—

December 1877	...	2'77	per 1,000
January 1878	...	3'27	"
February 1878	...	3'30	"

Now the average or normal death-rate of the provinces during the same three months, is about 1'30; at all events it was so in 1876-77. If the returns are defective, as they

probably are, there is still no reason to suppose that the registration was more accurate this year than it was last year or the year before. The chances presumably are, that if the registration was very defective in 1876 and 1877, when the mortality was comparatively low, it has been yet more imperfect in 1878, with a far larger number of casualties to enumerate. The Government of the North-West Provinces stands face to face, therefore, with its own truly dreadful record that 250,000 persons were mown down by death therein during the three months of the cold weather, all of whom presumably ought to-day to have been alive. It requires the exercise of a powerful imagination, to realise for a moment the sufferings which the people must have gone through, for so horrible a mortality to have occurred. Let it be remembered that these casualties represent, after all, but the cases in which the sufferings of the people reached the last extremity of death. By no effort of the imagination can we picture to ourselves the cruel hunger endured by masses of the labouring poor, with their women and little ones, before this death-roll was possible. Those of our readers whose life in India has been spent in the Lower Provinces, or in the neighbourhood of the sea, have no conception of what the *cold* season of the North-West means. From the miserable manner in which the people are clothed and housed, their sufferings from the cold can hardly be less than those of our own poor at home; and an imagination however active, and sympathy however quick, fail to realize what millions of the poor must have gone through, in the districts north-west of Benares, all through the winter months. The day labourers were plainly dying in crowds, from cold and hunger, in tens of thousands of villages throughout the North-West. The mortality returns simply give an imperfect record of the cases in which the flickering life at last went out of the skeleton socket, that could maintain it no longer. If we say that for every actual death that occurred, ten, twenty, or thirty men, women, and children trod the same path of awful suffering down to the very brink of death, we shall certainly not exaggerate the fact. And the existence of this dreadful state of matters was quite unknown, we are told, to the local Government. Plainly it is in a dilemma. If it is really true that this dreadful state of things could exist for months together, without the Government being

even aware of it, the gulf that yawns between our administration and the people, can end only in a cataclysm that will sweep it and us away together.

It is necessary that the Indian public should take clear hold of the fact, that we owe our present knowledge of the state of the North-West Provinces in the last cold weather, to the accident that we have been publishing for some years, official mortuary returns therein. But for these returns, Mr. Knight's statements upon the subject would have been dismissed as a mischievously exaggerated description of sufferings that were inevitable, and that Sir George Couper's government had done all in its power to avert or mitigate. So far from doing anything for the people, his "vigour and foresight" were directed to exacting the land revenue from them, when they had no means of paying it. The relief-works were closed at the very time when the need of them was more pressing than ever, the people being forced from them by slow starvation in a bitterly cold season, with neither blankets to cover their bodies, nor shelter for their heads. *This* is the administration we have really had, and that was officially declared to have been marked with success, until this dreadful death-roll showed us the true state of matters.

We ask the Government of India to look at the following returns for the month of February from the Rohilkhund Division, and to compare them with the returns of the same month last year, as a proof of the "vigor and foresight" with which the local Government dealt with the famine, in that part of its territorial charge :—

		Feby. 1878.	Feby. 1877.
Bijnour	...	5,425	844
Moradabad	...	5,812	1,230
Bareilly	...	9,665	1,190
Shajehanpore	...	10,208	971
Budaon	...	8,900	1,190
TOTAL	...	<u>40,000</u>	<u>5,425</u>

Now this terrible mortality arose from starvation. The season, we are assured, was by no means an unhealthy one. On the contrary, it was a healthy season; and here is a death-rate nearly eight times in excess of the

rate last year. Again, take the figures of the Agra Division in the same month:—

	Febry. 1878.	Febry. 1877.
Etah	3,856 deaths.	713 deaths.
Muttra	1,725 "	867 "
Furruckabad	3,606 "	1,131 "
Mainpuri	2,443 "	838 "
Agra	4,736 "	1,382 "
Etawah	1,911 "	857 "
TOTAL ...	<u>18,277</u> deaths.	<u>5,768</u> deaths.

Again, take the Lucknow Division:—

Lucknow... ..	6,296 deaths.	979 deaths.
Bara Bunke	5,575 "	1,203 "
Unao	4,323 "	953 "
TOTAL ...	<u>16,194</u> deaths.	<u>3,135</u> deaths.

This terrible mortality was not confined to the month of February, be it remembered, but had been going on from November. Not to weary our readers, we give the returns of the Rohilkhund Division only:—

November 1877 ...	18,233 deaths	} Against a previous rate of 5,000 to 8,000 per month.
December " ...	30,840 "	
January 1878 ...	38,522 "	
February " ...	40,000 "	

This is comment enough, we think, upon the "vigour and foresight" with which the local Government provided for the safety of the people, after the loss of their *khurreef* harvest. *Practically, nothing was done for them*; while the land revenue was exacted just as if no calamity whatever had befallen them. And here is the result. When Mr. Knight wrote from Agra in the middle of February that there was "actual famine" in the provinces, he ought to have said "actual famine had been raging from November," while the Government had not lifted a finger to save the people.

* * * * *

When these returns are looked into carefully, the facts they disclose are most distressing. Thus, the *Pioneer* notices that the deaths from suicide were twice as numerous in the month of February last, as in February 1877. Had

the writer looked more carefully into the figures, he would have seen that the misery of the people was leading them to wholesale self-destruction. The mortality from suicide is recorded under the general head of *Injuries*, the deaths from which are classified under the four heads of suicide, wounds, snake-bite and wild-beasts, and accidents. Now the mortality under these four heads in February. contrasts with that of the same month in 1877 as follows:—

		Suicide. Wounds. Snake-bite, &c. Accidents.			
Feb. 1878	...	159	148	64	895
„ 1877	...	83	69	67	563

Thus, with the single exception of death from snake-bite or from wild-beasts, the increased mortality is frightful. We may fairly assume that nearly all the casualties under the head of *Accidents* are deaths from drowning; and that unless where positive proof was forthcoming that the deceased person had wilfully drowned himself, the death would be recorded as an “accident.” So with the returns under the head of *Wounds*, the figures indicate clearly enough, that the people have been destroying themselves in this way also. The great majority of the deaths from drowning are probably suicides in all years; but let that be as it may, the mortality returns of the last few months show with painful distinctness what the sufferings of the people have really been:—

		December,		January,		February,	
		1876	1877	1877	1878	1877	1878
Suicides	...	85	126	111	146	83	159
Wounds	...	89	156	78	149	69	148
Snake-bite, &c.	...	79	86	77	71	67	64
Accidents	...	568	919	542	1,040	563	895
		821	1,287	808	1,406	782	1,266

There is unhappily no room for mistaking what these figures mean. The deaths from snake-bite and from wild animals are normal, and these only. The others show but too plainly that between 3,000 and 4,000 people sought an escape from a lingering death by starvation, during these three months of the cold weather, by throwing themselves into the nearest pond or well.

Their privations began during the autumn months, and produced heavy mortality as soon as the cold weather

approached. Thus 83,656 deaths occurred in November, and then—

		1876-77	1877-78
December	...	66,675	116,330 deaths.
January	...	50,427	137,161 „
February	...	43,999	138,758 „
Aggregate	...	<u>161,101</u>	<u>392,249 deaths.</u>

The Sanitary Commissioner of the North-West himself volunteers the statement that the excessive mortality in the Provinces during December and January, was probably due to the extreme distress of the poor “during this season of high prices.” This is but a euphemistic avoidance of a plain statement of the fact, that hunger alone was killing nearly three times as many people in the Provinces, as all other causes combined. Upon the whole, we doubt if we shall come through this calamity without a net record of 300,000 to 400,000 deaths from starvation.

These are only the most essential portions of a series of editorials, published about the same time in the *Statesman*. These and Mr. Knight's letters contained charges against Sir George Couper's government which could not be ignored, and the Lieutenant-Governor therefore recorded a minute in his own defence. The minute and the reply of the Government of India were published in the *Gazette of India*, evidently in the hope that they would abolish Mr. Knight and close the discussion. Under Lord Lytton's predecessors, an attempt would have been made to ignore such newspaper criticism, and it is greatly to the credit of the present Viceroy that on this, as on every other occasion, he has been ready to recognise and respond to the fair criticism of an independent Press. The publication of this correspondence enabled the *Statesman* to show how hollow and inaccurate Sir George Couper's defence was, and in so doing to expose more crushingly—and this time by official evidence, which has convinced even opposing critics—the real character of the so-called relief operations in the North-West.

SIR GEORGE COUPER'S DEFENCE.

No. 1007A.

From—C. ROBERTSON, Esq., *Secretary to Government,
N.-W. Provinces and Oudh,*

To—*The Secretary to the Government of India, Public
Works Department.*

NAINI TAL, 23rd April 1878.

A letter appeared in the *Calcutta Statesman* of the 30th ultimo, signed "R. Knight," which contained grave charges of maladministration of the distress which now prevails in these provinces, on the part of the Lieutenant-Governor; and as Sir George Couper believes Mr. Knight was formerly in Government employ, and is a person of some consideration, he thinks it incumbent on him not to leave these charges unnoticed and unanswered. I am, therefore, desirous to submit herewith a Minute which His Honor has recorded on the subject.

*Minute by His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces and Chief Commissioner for Oudh,—
dated Naini Tal, the 23rd April 1878.*

"The charges brought against me by Mr. Knight would seem to resolve themselves into three. There are other points of detail, but I do not think it necessary to take up my own time and that of His Excellency, the Viceroy in Council in discussing these. These charges are—

I.—That I showed no prevision and made no forecast of danger in circumstances that urgently demanded both; and the measures subsequently undertaken were ludicrously inadequate; that in point of fact, there never were any relief-works worthy of the name until 20th January.

II.—That a large majority of my officers have sent in appeal after appeal in every possible tone—"angry, piteous, sarcastic, economical, sanitary"—which have been met with cold denial and disbelief, and sometimes with censure and punishment.

III.—That my statement that the people were unwilling to work is untrue. They would have been ready enough to work, but that a daily wage of six chittacks of flour and one of dhall was not enough for their support, and therefore they would not come to the relief-works where this dole was given.

“The reports already submitted to the Government of India are, I think, amply sufficient to acquit me of the first charge. It will be enough here to say that, in September last, when it was feared that rain would not fall in time to save the spring sowings, the Chief Engineer of the North-Western Provinces visited the head-quarters of each division to concert with the Commissioners and the district officers, who were summoned to meet him, the measures of relief which should be undertaken in the event of our being visited with this dire calamity. Subsequently rain fell, and all immediate necessity for action passed away in consequence. But it was known that the autumn crops had been a complete failure, and consequently that during the period between the spring sowings and the harvesting operations, there would be great distress among the people who depend upon the produce of the autumn crop for their support. So, in October, Colonel Fraser was again deputed to visit the head-quarters of each division, and in consultation with the district officers, settle what works should be undertaken to give employment to the poor when the inevitable pressure began. The necessary arrangements were accordingly made and sanctioned throughout the provinces, and, where it was needful, money was at once allotted for carrying out the preliminary surveys. At the same time, the standard rules for the establishment of poor-houses, for the relief of those too feeble to work, were circulated for the information of district officers, with an intimation that they were at once to act upon them, should necessity arise. I submit that it was not in the power of the local Government to take further precautions than these in anticipation of the coming distress.

“With regard to the special charge, that the relief measures were ludicrously inadequate, and that none worthy of the name were undertaken until 20th January, I have only to say that the accompanying return (A) shows that some thousands were employed daily throughout the months of September, October, November, and December

in the Agra District, to which it is evident Mr. Knight specially refers. That more were not employed is due to the circumstance that more people did not come; that there was work enough for them is proved by the fact that the river embankment was started on 28th September, and afforded employment to tens of thousands in February and March, who would have been employed similarly earlier had they only chosen to come.

"With regard to the second charge I have to say that
 * * * in January last Mr. McMinn wrote me three or four letters, which have been to some extent reproduced in that of Mr. Knight: there was the same story of the gaunt mother throwing her child into a well, and of the husbands flinging their girl-wives into ponds * * * I sent his letters to the Commissioner of his division, with an intimation that the statements which they contain could not be passed over, and that the Magistrate should at once visit the spot indicated by Mr. McMinn and report the result.

"The Magistrate reported that there was no doubt great distress, although Mr. McMinn's descriptions were great exaggerations, and added that it might at once have been alleviated, had Mr. McMinn chosen to follow the instructions laid down for his guidance, instead of acting on a hobby of his own. He wound up by saying that he had taken the necessary measures to put matters right.

"Perhaps I ought to have censured Mr. McMinn for having ignored his immediate superiors, and sent me direct letters which contained great exaggerations; but, as a matter of fact, I did not do so, much less did I punish him; and yet this is really the sole foundation which Mr. Knight has for the statement which he made, doubtless with the best of motives, but which nevertheless I am inclined to think somewhat sweeping in its nature, that a large majority of my officers have sent in appeal after appeal in every possible tone—angry, piteous, sarcastic, economical, sanitary—which have been met with cold denial and disbelief, and sometimes with censure and punishment.

"Mr. Knight's third charge is that my statement, that the people would not come to the relief-works, is substantially false, that is to say, they would have been ready enough to come had the supply of food been sufficient.

"Mr. Knight says, in support of this charge, that in Agra

itself the wages were six chittacks of flour and one of dhal per day, down to the last week in January, when it was raised through fright to ten chittacks of flour and two of dhal. And he gives me the alternative of either being grossly extravagant now, or having starved the people before. From what source Mr. Knight derived his statement I know not, but the following figures will show that he has fallen into some strange error. The quantity of food considered necessary for the support of an ordinary man on the relief-works was fixed, in conformity with former precedent, at ten chittacks of wheat, two chittacks of dhal, $\frac{1}{4}$ chittack of salt, $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers of fire-wood; and one anna six pie was the money rate fixed to be paid to each man for the purchase of the above amount of food. And the Magistrate of Agra certifies that this sum has been received daily ever since the commencement of the relief operations. The following table shows the price-current of the dietary above referred to in the Agra District:—

Return showing price-current of food grain, Agra District.

Month.	Fortnight ending	Rates per rupee.				Remarks		
		Wheat.		Dhall.	Fire-wood.			
1877.		S.	C.	S.	C.	Mds.	S.	
September ...	15th	11	14 $\frac{3}{4}$	11	0	4	0	A.
Ditto ...	30th	10	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	9	6	4	0	
October ...	15th	11	0	10	0	4	0	
Ditto ...	31st	12	0	11	0	3	0	
November ...	15th	12	0	11	0	2	20	
Ditto ...	30th	12	8	11	0	3	0	
December ...	15th	12	4	13	0	2	30	B.
Ditto ...	31st	12	0	12	8	2	30	
1878.								
January ...	15th	11	0	12	0	2	20	
Ditto ...	31st	11	0	11	8	2	20	
						Assumed at		
February ...	15th	10	8	11	8	2	20	
Ditto ...	28th	11	8	11	8	2	10	
March ...	15th	12	8	12	0	2	20	
				A.		B.		
10 chittacks wheat, cost in pies ...				11'5		11'4		
2 Ditto Dhall, „ ...				2'6		2'1		
$\frac{1}{4}$ Ditto Salt, „ ...				0'3		0'3.		
$1\frac{1}{2}$ seers Firewood, „ ...				1'8		2'9		
Total cost in pies ...				16'2		16'7		
Allowed by Government ...				18'0		18'0		
Government scale in excess of absolute cost of food ...				1'8		1'3		pies.

"Those periods during which prices ranged highest are marked A and B, and yet it will be seen that, even during those periods, the sum allowed, *viz.*, one anna six pie, was sufficient for the purchase of the requisite amount of food, and gave a margin besides. It may be that these figures do place me on one of the horns of the dilemma stated by Mr. Knight. For it would seem that, on the whole, the prescribed allowance of one anna and six pie *was* more than sufficient to purchase the necessary quantity of food. But it is very difficult, in dealing with large bodies of people, to do more than lay down general rules; and I hope, having regard to the peculiar difficulties of the case, that if I have erred on the side of liberality, I shall not want the forgiveness of His Excellency the Viceroy in Council. But be the Viceroy's decision on this point what it may, I think I have demonstrated that, whatever the causes which deterred the people from coming to the works may have been, insufficiency of food was not one of them.

"Mr. Knight refers to the appalling mortality which, as he truly says, was double and treble that recorded during the same months of the previous year; and I can fully sympathize with his indignation at the thought of so much suffering, which, in his opinion, might have been averted. But it is to be borne in mind that in the previous year the autumn crop, which yields the food on which the people who swell the mortuary returns have to depend, was plentiful; whereas it is not too much to say, indeed Mr. Knight himself declares, that the *khurreef* of the present year was a total failure. Now it must be remembered what that means. It does not mean the curtailment of a few luxuries, or even of a few necessities. It means that the people were absolutely without one of the cardinal conditions of life, *viz.*, food, and in a great measure without another cardinal condition of existence, *viz.*, shelter. For the loss of the crop not only deprived them of their ordinary food, but also of the shelter which they obtain in normal years from the straw yielded by the autumn crop when garnered. In many places, too, the people had stripped the thatch from their dwellings to feed their cattle. Seeing then that the present season was abnormally cold, I do not think it wonderful, although it is doubtless a fact greatly to be deplored, that double and treble the number of the aged, of the weakly, and of the young, should have succumbed for want of the

shelter and food which they had in plenty during the previous year, specially as owing to the drought there was comparatively but little fever during the autumn months, and the hundreds who would in ordinary years have succumbed to that disease, were spared to fall victims to privation and cold a few months later.

"But whether this point be conceded or not, I can only say, in the words of the Commissioner of Rohilkhund, in whose division the distress pressed most sorely, that, speaking broadly, no person need have died who was willing to give an equivalent for his food in the shape of work. Mr. Edwards writes :—"Every effort is being made to alleviate suffering and save life. The people themselves are the chief difficulty. They stick in their villages, and refuse aid if any return in the way of work is demanded."

And Mr. Duthoit, the Collector of Shahjehanpore, which was perhaps the most stricken district of this stricken division, and whose humanity is well-known, in a letter describing the efforts he was making to induce the people to have resort to the works, writes :—"The people who starve are those who *wont* go to relief-works or relief camps,—will not leave their villages in fact." And the same state of affairs has been reported from several other districts. The returns show that this reluctance is being overcome by degrees; but I do not know what more could have been done, *in the first instance*, than to have everything in readiness to receive the people if they chose to come. The village Chowkidars visit the head-quarters Police stations at regular intervals, and the people must have known through their instrumentality that relief was available. But they would not avail themselves of it, nor did they wander about the country, in their numbers, in search of food. If they had, they could have been drafted on to the works. There is nothing more remarkable in the present distress than the absence of large bodies of people invading the sudder stations and other place of European resort, clamouring for aid. In 1837, the people beset the houses of the European residents in thousands, begging for the food which they had not to give, and, for the want of which, the poor sufferers lay down in their numbers and died in the compounds. Nothing of the sort has been seen this year, and I submit that this fact goes a long way towards corroborating the statement that the people preferred to stay at their homes. The only way in which this could have been prevented, would have been

to visit every village, and every house in each village, and urge, and if need were, compel, every person who seemed unable to support himself, to have resort to the relief-work or poor-houses. I will confess that I was unprepared for the sad apathy with regard to their fate evinced by the people, and, therefore, that this alternative did not occur to me. For all former experience in these provinces has shown that the people are willing enough to come forward themselves when really in want. And even if it had, our European agency was altogether inadequate for such an undertaking, while to have entrusted it to Native agency might, and almost certainly would, have involved an amount of interference and oppression hardly less disastrous in its effect, although in a different way, than the calamity which we sought to alleviate.

"In conclusion, I have to say that I have had to contend with a very heavy visitation. I have had the guidance and advice of Colonel Fraser, my Chief Engineer, whose public worth and experience in these matters is as well known to the Government of India, as are his humanity and kindness of heart to a wide circle of private friends. I have also had the co-operation and counsel of the Commissioners of Divisions and District Officers, for whose unwearying and disinterested support I can never be sufficiently grateful. But notwithstanding all this help, what the care and trouble and anxiety have been, can only be appreciated by the few who have been similarly situated.

"I am far from wishing it to be supposed that my management of this famine has been immaculate. On the contrary, I have myself pointed out short-comings and mistakes which have occurred. But I can conscientiously say that I have done my best, and, whatever my failures may have been, I trust the Government of India will at least acquit me of having been "apathetically blind" in that I made no forecast of, and took no measures to meet, the present calamity; of having bullied the officers to whose services I am so much indebted, because their warnings were unpalatable; and of having lied when I represented that the chief difficulty with which we all have had to contend, has been the reluctance of the people themselves to have resort to the works which had been organised for their support."

GEORGE COUPER,
Lieut.-Govr., N. W. P., and
Chief Commr. for Oudh.

APPENDIX A.

Number of labourers employed in Agra District.

Month.	Week.	Total for the week.	Daily Average.	Daily average from poor-house return.	Total daily average.
September..	III.	15,741	2,248 5/7	.....	2,248 5/7
	IV.	24,393	2,710 3/4	325	3,035 1/8
October ..	I.	39,459	5,637	285 ^a	5,922
	II.	37,027	5,289 4/7	285 ^a	5,574 4/7
	III.	40,009	5,715 4/7	285 ^a	6,000 4/7
	IV.	60,906	6,090 3/5	285 ^a	6,375 3/5
November ..	I.	43,956	6,279 3/7	285 ^a	6,564 3/7
	II.	23,997	3,428 1/7	285 ^a	3,713 1/7
	III.	24,852	3,550 2/7	285 ^a	3,835 2/7
	IV.	37,946	4,216 2/9	285 ^a	4,501 2/9
December ..	I.	28,130	4,018 4/7	217	4,235 4/7
	II.	23,753	3,393 2/4	190	3,583 2/7
	III.	42,357	6,051	191	6,242
	IV.	43,887	4,388 7/10	199	4,587 7/10
January ..	I.	17,528	2,504	323	2,827
	II.	18,660	2,665 1/7	473	3,138 5/7
	III.	22,924	3,274 6/7	522	3,796 6/7
	IV.	81,459	8,145 9/10	567	8,712 9/10
February ..	I.	98,000	14,000	654	14,614
	II.	138,500	19,785 5/7	825	20,610 5/7
	III.	163,632	23,376	904	24,280
	IV.	223,078	31,868 2/7	988	32,856 2/7
March ..	I.	208,801	29,828 5/7	1,446	31,274 5/7
	II.	170,286	24,326 4/7	1,509	25,835 4/7
	III.	115,475	16,496 3/7	1,100	17,596 3/7
	IV.	101,378	10,137 8/10	959	11,196 8/10

• No. 1256.

From—C. BERNARD, Esq., C.S.I., *Addl. Secretary to the Government of India,*

To—*The Secretary to Government, N. W. Provinces and Oudh.*

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.
Famine.

SIMLA, the 2nd May 1878.

SIR,—I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 1007 A, dated 23rd April, forwarding a Minute

by the Hon'ble the Lieutenant-Governor upon certain statements made in the Calcutta *Statesman* newspaper concerning the measures taken for the relief of distress in the North-Western Provinces during the present season.

2. In reply, I am to say that His Excellency the Viceroy in Council has read with much interest the convincing statement of facts set forth in Sir George Couper's Minute. No such statement, indeed, was needed to convince the Government of India that the Lieutenant-Governor had exercised forethought in his arrangements, and has shown humanity in his orders, throughout the recent crisis; but the Viceroy in Council is glad to have this opportunity of expressing his sympathy with the cares and anxieties by which the Lieutenant-Governor was surrounded, and his appreciation of, and humane consideration for, the people, with which these troubles had been encountered.

3. The Viceroy in Council cannot fail to share with Sir George Couper the deep and painful regret expressed by him at the lamentable mortality which in the early months of the year visited the distressed districts. This mortality was due in part to the unusual cold of the season, superimposed upon the privation caused by the total failure of the previous *khurreef* crop; but the mortality, so far as it was directly the result of famine, was caused rather by the unwillingness of the people to leave their homes, than by any want of forethought on the part of the local Government in providing works where they might be relieved. The Viceroy in Council unhesitatingly accepts the statement of the local Government that no one who was willing to go to a relief-work need have died of famine, and it is satisfactorily shown in His Honor's Minute that the relief wage was ample.

4. This same phenomenon, however, of the unwillingness of famine-stricken people to leave their villages in order to betake themselves to relief-works, has been forced on the attention of Government in other provinces also. It is a problem very difficult to deal with, and it indicates the apparent necessity of providing, simultaneously with relief-works, a numerous, and it is to be feared an expensive, organisation of village inspectors. Unless by these means, or some other remedy, the difficulty can be met, it must always, where the system of relief is based on the

sound principle of work tests, go far in the early stages of a famine to render nugatory the humane desire of Government to save life. The special attention of the Famine Commission will be directed to this point.

I have the honor to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

C. BERNARD,

Addl. Secretary to the Govt. of India.

THE "STATESMAN'S" REPLY.*

FOR the first time within our knowledge, the Government has wisely condescended to recognise that place in the constitution of the country, which it has itself assigned to the Public Press by conferring upon it the right of complete freedom of speech. There is no Parliament in India in which the representatives of the people may challenge the conduct of the Executive Government, and in which the Government may reply to the satisfaction of the country. By wisely condescending, however, to answer through the Press itself, open and specific charges brought against it therein, the Government may plainly secure to the country some of the most important advantages that representative assemblies confer upon other lands. We thank His Excellency the Viceroy, therefore, warmly for publishing the defence of Sir George Couper to the grave charges made against his administration of the N.-W. Provinces in these columns by Mr Knight. It is the very wisest thing the Government could do, and is the most important step towards administrative reform that has been taken for many years. The publication of Sir George Couper's defence is accompanied, however, by one false step. It was most unwise for the Government of India to identify itself so completely with Sir George Couper's reputation. We shall be able to show conclusively, and in a way that admits of no reply, that our charges against Sir George Couper are true. Now, the Government of India unwisely writes:—

"His Excellency the Viceroy in Council has read with much interest the convincing statement of facts set forth in Sir George Couper's minute. No such statement, indeed, was needed to convince the Government of India that the Lieutenant-Governor *had exercised forethought in his arrangements and has shown humanity in his orders, throughout the recent crisis*; but the Viceroy in Council is glad to have this opportunity of expressing his sympathy with the cares and anxieties by which the Lieutenant-Governor was surrounded, and his appreciation of, and *humane consideration for, the people, with which these troubles had been encountered.*"

The reader will be good enough to note carefully the words we have italicized in this extract, and to bear them in mind as we proceed to show the *total want of foresight* shown by Sir George Couper throughout this calamity, and

* Extracted from the editorial columns of the *Statesman* of 9th May *et postea*.

the inhumanity of his orders. Why was the Government of India in such unwise haste to anticipate the results of this enquiry, and to pronounce this unjustified verdict of acquittal? We can understand and respect the generous feeling which prompted the acquittal, but its publication only makes it the more incumbent upon us to press home the charges we have made against Sir George, and to leave neither him nor the Government of India a loophole of escape. It is our duty, now more than ever, to declare without reservation, that more than 300,000 people have been consigned to death under the Government of Sir George Couper, by a want of foresight equalled only by its want of humanity. How could Mr. Secretary Bernard be so unwise as to permit His Excellency in Council to give the following assurance to the world:—

“This lamentable mortality was due in part to the unusual cold of the season, superimposed upon the privation caused by the total failure of the previous *khurreef* crop : but the mortality, so far as it was directly the result of famine, was caused rather by the unwillingness of the people to leave their homes, than by any want of forethought on the part of the local Government in providing works where they might be relieved. The Viceroy in Council unhesitatingly accepts the statement of the local Government that no one who was willing to go to a relief-work need have died of famine, and it is satisfactorily shown in his Honor’s minute that the relief wage was ample.”

We ask the reader once more to bear these assurances in mind. Mr. Bernard is incapable of writing or saying what he does not believe to be true, and there is plainly a very disagreeable surprise awaiting both himself and his Excellency the Viceroy, whom he has betrayed into these assurances. This is still one passage in Mr. Bernard’s letter that must be noticed before we proceed to the examination of Sir George Couper’s own statements. It is this:—

“This same phenomenon of the unwillingness of famine-stricken people to leave their villages in order to betake themselves to relief-works, has been forced on the attention of Government in other provinces also. It is a problem very difficult to deal with, and it indicates the apparent necessity of providing, simultaneously with relief-works, a numerous, and it is to be feared an expensive, organisation of village inspectors. Unless by these means, or some other remedy, the difficulty can be met, it must always, where the system of relief is based on the sound principle of work tests, go far in the early stages of a famine to render nugatory the humane desire of Government to save life. The special attention of the Famine Commission will be directed to this point.”

We shall show presently that if the people *en masse* preferred death to Sir George Couper’s relief-works, it was the cruel, the inhuman, character of those works, and not any aversion to labour, that made them do so. It is a

calumny upon these miserable poor, to suggest that they wanted the State to feed them without giving work in return for it, and we believe we shall be able to make this so clear, that even Mr. Bernard himself will be convinced, and that the Famine Commission may be spared this hollow and idle reference to its members. If we have charged Sir George Couper falsely, let the world treat us as slanderers. On the other hand, if we show that we have charged him truthfully, let him be made to retire from a position that he has so deplorably abused. We now come to his defence. He says:—

—“The charges brought against me by Mr. Knight would seem to resolve themselves into three. There are other points of detail, but I do not think it necessary to take up my own time, and that of His Excellency the Viceroy in Council, in discussing these. These charges are:—

I.—That I showed no prevision and made no forecast of danger in circumstances that urgently demanded both; and the measures subsequently undertaken were ludicrously inadequate; that in point of fact there never were any relief works worthy of the name until 20th January.

II.—That a large majority of my officers have sent in appeal after appeal in every possible tone—“angry, piteous, sarcastic, economical, sanitary”—which have been met with cold denial and disbelief, and sometimes with censure and punishment.

III.—That my statement that the people were unwilling to work, is untrue. They would have been ready enough to work, but that a daily wage of 6 chittacks of flour and one of dhall was not enough for their support, and therefore they would not come to the relief works where this dole was given.”

Sir George proceeds to say that “the reports submitted by him to the Government of India are amply sufficient to acquit him of the first charge, namely, want of prevision or foresight of what was coming. In further proof of his ‘foresight’ of the calamity, and that it was not confined to writing mere ‘reports’ to the Supreme Government, he tells us that he deputed Colonel Fraser in September, to visit the head-quarters of each division, to concert with the local executive the measures that should be undertaken “in the event of our being visited with this dire calamity.” Not content with that deputation, he sent Colonel Fraser a second time, on a similar tour in October, after the providential and unexpected rainfall at the commencement of that month. As almost everything turns upon this *second* tour of Colonel Fraser, it is important that Sir George Couper’s own account of it should be quoted *verbatim*:—

“It was known that the autumn crops had been a complete failure, and consequently, that during the period between the spring sowings and the harvesting operations, there would be great distress among the people, who

depend upon the produce of the autumn crop for their support.. So in October, Colonel Fraser was again deputed to visit the head-quarters of each division, and, in consultation with the District Officers, settle what works should be undertaken to give employment to the poor when the inevitable pressure began. The necessary arrangements were accordingly made and sanctioned throughout the provinces, and where it was needful, money was at once allotted for carrying out the preliminary surveys. At the same time the standard rules for the establishment of poor-houses for the relief of those too feeble to work, were circulated for the information of District Officers, with an intimation that they were at once to act upon them should necessity arise. I submit that it was not in the power of the local Government to take further precautions than these in anticipation of the coming distress.

Observe that our charge is not that Sir George Couper did not anticipate and foresee a certain amount of distress during the cold weather. He would have been more incapable still, than even we suppose him to be, had he doubted *that*. Our charge is that he did not 'foresee' or make any provision whatever for the dreadful calamity that hung over the provinces like a black cloud: that he did not discern the famine even when it was raging around him, as the mortality returns show that it was, throughout November. Colonel Fraser's deputation tour, on which we shall have much to say, came to a close on the 12th November at Kulpi; and so far was Sir George Couper from 'foreseeing' anything, we have proof positive that so late as the 23rd November—at a time when the people were already dying by tens of thousands—he was in a fool's paradise on the subject. We are under the heavy disadvantage of not possessing Sir George Couper's reports to the Government of India; but one of his reports is in our hands—his report to the Government on the 23rd November last. Now, in that report we find him assuring the Government that all "danger of widespread famine had happily passed away," and also openly admitting that "*if relief works on a large scale had been necessary,*" his Government would have been "*in a most serious difficulty, from the absence of any well-considered projects for large public works on which to employ the people.*" Widespread famine, as we now know, was at that very moment disclosing itself. He was on the very verge of the calamity, when he assured the Government that all "danger had passed away" and happily so, because, if it had occurred, he was totally unprepared to meet it. In the same letter, he told the Government that everything depended on the Christmas rains. If these fell seasonably, everything would be well, and he would be able to meet any distress arising from the failure of the previous *khurreef* out of local resources, without troubling the Government.

of India. That Sir George Couper believed all this, no one will doubt, but how can we, and how dare the Government, compliment him on the 'foresight' which he showed? The Christmas rains *did* fall seasonably, as every one knows, —fell inabundance, while an awful famine accompanied them, without his recognising it even then, when it was there. And yet the Government of India can tell the public that he showed great "foresight and vigour." Comment upon such facts would be simply idle. Wherein was the 'foresight' shown? Was it shown in assuring the Government that all danger had happily passed away, and that if the Christmas rains did not fail them, he could manage any distress that might exist, without troubling the Government of India? If the Christmas rains but fell seasonably, all anxiety even would be at an end; yet when the rains *did* fall, and a widespread famine unexpectedly disclosed itself, his Government was not only unprepared to meet it, but did not even know that it had come upon the people.

If Sir George Couper on the 23rd November had told the Government that the danger unhappily had *not* passed away, but was imminent; and that it was very doubtful whether the Christmas rains would at all dissipate the gloom that was settling down over the provinces; that the mortality returns were already appalling; and that, unhappily, he had no matured projects of relief-works on which to set the people,—*that* would have been 'foresight.' So blind was he, that he even went on collecting the land revenue up to the middle of January last; and we suppose Mr. Bernard will tell us that *this* also was foresight; vigour it was undoubtedly, or more properly rigour of the most lamentable order. Who was answerable for the total unpreparedness of Sir George Couper's government to meet the calamity of famine, by a well-ordered scheme of public works, we cannot possibly ascertain. Presumably it was he himself, for we have the confession under his own hand that he *was* thus unprepared so late as the 23rd November, months after the total failure of the rains and the *khurreef*. He openly confesses and deplors his unpreparedness, but says, "happily it is of no consequence since the October rainfall. Let the Christmas rains but come, and our unpreparedness will be of no consequence to any one." And Mr. Bernard dares describe all this to the world as distinguished 'foresight and vigour!' Let the public judge between us and the Government.

But we have charged Sir George Couper's government with having deliberately starved the people off the relief-works, by a rate of wages insufficient to keep soul and body together, and by leaving them exposed without shelter or a common cooly-blanket to protect them from the bitter cold of a North-West winter, with the thermometer at freezing point. Now this vindication of Sir George Couper is silent, we notice, as to the question of shelter and clothing. As to the rate of wages, we abide by our statement that the wages on these works—we do not know on how many of them—was but 12 ounces of flour and 2 of dhall up to the end of January, when the allowance was raised to 20 ounces. It is impossible that we should be mistaken, for we inquired minutely whether it was true, and were told to publish it boldly, as it was perfectly true. We are under this disadvantage, that we are called upon to prove the statements of witnesses whom we cannot put into the witness-box. Our readers will observe that Mr. McMinn is charged by Sir George Couper, with having been our sole informant in this matter. Mr. McMinn, we believe, has acknowledged that he did supply us with certain of the facts stated by us in these columns. And with what result to himself? Five or six men are at once promoted over his head, and he is ordered to proceed to Basti, the penal settlement of the North-West. And having dared to do this openly, to stop the mouths of the witnesses who would otherwise appear against him, Sir George Couper comes before the public challenging us to produce proof of the statements we have made. Well, we are going to produce other witnesses than Mr. McMinn, but let any Magistrate in the North-West openly come forward in his own name, and declare the sense he entertains of the conduct of Sir George Couper's administration throughout this calamity—and it will ruin him! Within the last week, we have had repeated assurances from other officers in the North-West, that our charges against Sir George Couper are true to the letter; but they have begged us not to hint even generally how we got our information. Is not such Government an infamy in our circumstances? We are challenged to produce our witnesses, when even to name them, would be to ruin them. Heavy as is our disadvantage, we can however do enough to convince the public that we have not misrepresented matters, and that Sir George Couper's administration deserves all we have said about it.

The Government of India is compromised to some extent in Sir George Couper's action. So far back as the 29th August last, a communication was addressed by the Government of India to the Government of the North-West, in which His Excellency the Viceroy showed very clearly his dislike of certain proposals that had been made by the local Government to open relief-works in the provinces. "His Excellency advises," ran the despatch, "that the relief-wage on such works be fixed at *the lowest subsistence rate.*"

Let the reader note carefully the words we have italicised. We are most reluctant to say so—for we have a strong regard and esteem for him—but the truth is, Sir John

Strachey belongs to the old school that does not believe in the new famine-relief policy. Sir John has never cordially accepted that policy, and it is he, we fear, who struck the keynote of the Imperial policy, both in Madras and in the North-West, that has ended so deplorably in South Africa.

He belongs, quite honestly we are sure, to the old school of thought upon the subject. He regards it as Utopian and Quixotic to suppose that the Government should charge itself with the responsibility of keeping the people alive in famine. Stated nakedly and in the form in which the *Pioneer* has many times put it—it is a Quixotic interference with Nature, to attempt to thwart her efforts to dispose of the surplus population of the land. Nature which sends the storm-wave of the hurricane over the land, to engulf a quarter of a million of the population who are only starving thereon, would effect the same beneficent end in the North-West by now and again refusing the rainfall of the year; and instead of recognising the ultimate beneficence of her intentions, we stupidly step in with our relief-works and new famine policy, to preserve the people alive, whom Nature was kindly minded to be rid of. We are most distressed to find this note once more dominating the action of the Supreme Government. Not a line has ever emanated from the old school of Civilian on this terrible subject, that did not contain, in some shape or other, the caution: "Not to do too much for the people." This spirit unhappily breathes in every line written by this school, to this hour; and until this evil spirit is exorcised and cast out of the Government, these dreadful scandals will never end. "His Excellency advises that, if relief-works are opened, the wages be fixed at the lowest subsistence rates." And now, mark

what followed. In the middle of October last, Colonel Fraser, the Secretary to the Government of the North-West in the Public Works Department, made the second tour that Sir George Couper speaks of, to all the Commissionships in the provinces. He opened his visitation at Bareilly on the 19th October, having summoned the Commissioner, the Collector, and the Executive Engineers of the division to meet him there, and began the proceedings, by reading the following extract from a letter addressed to himself by Sir George Couper :—

" Please discourage relief-works in every possible way. It may be, however, that when agricultural operations are over, some of the people may want work. This, however, except on works for which there is budget provision, should only be given if the Collector is satisfied that without it the people would actually starve. Mere distress is not a sufficient reason for opening a relief-work. And if a relief-work is started, task work should be rigorously exacted, and the people put on the barest subsistence wage ; so that we may be satisfied that if any other kind of work were procurable elsewhere, they would resort to it."

We pause : we beg the reader to pause, and to re-read these instructions, and remember that Sir George Couper is resenting Mr. Knight's charges against him, little supposing that these directions to Colonel Fraser would be in our hands. Colonel Fraser went from Rohilkhund to the Meerut division, thence to the Agra division, thence to Lucknow, thence to Benares, thence to Allahabad, and finally to Jhansi. He assembled the Commissioners and District Officers, at the head-quarters of each to meet him ; and opened the proceedings at all alike, by reading this same extract from Sir George Couper's instructions to him. He was ordered, he told them, to "*discourage relief-works in every possible way.*" The italics are ours. Now these meetings, be it remembered, were being held up to the 12th November, on which date the last of them took place at Jhansi. 'Mere distress,' he told them in Sir George Couper's words, was not to be considered "a sufficient reason for opening a relief-work." Mere distress, even when the people *were without work*, was not to be a sufficient reason. The District Officers were to shut their ears to 'mere distress,' and their eyes even to the fact that the people were 'without work.' They were to open works

only when they had "*satisfied*" themselves—mark the expression *satisfied*—that the people would actually die, if they did not open them. And when they did open the works, task work was to be "rigorously exacted," in return for "bare subsistence." And to-day, when we are standing face to face with the horrible mortality which these instructions have produced, Mr. Knight is scandalously to blame for charging Sir George Couper with the guilt of it,—Sir George Couper who did all that he could do to save the people alive!

Sir George Couper would have the world believe that he sent Colonel Fraser on his second deputation, to make provision for the calamity which he foresaw was coming. No more untruthful suggestion could possibly have been made. Colonel Fraser was sent on this tour, to shut up the relief-works that were then in existence, and to prohibit their being re-opened. Little did Sir George Couper imagine, when writing this defence, that he would be confronted with his own instructions to Colonel Fraser. Those instructions were perfectly consistent with Sir George Couper's view of the position. He believed danger to be over, through the early October rainfall; and Colonel Fraser was sent on this tour, to compel the local executive everywhere to close the relief-works that had been opened in September. Anything more absolutely untrue than the statement, or suggestion, that he sent Colonel Fraser on this mission, because he foresaw that 'widespread famine' was coming upon the people, and that he was anxious to make definite preparations to meet it, we say advisedly was never before put upon an official record. Sir George Couper has concealed from the public what the real object of Colonel Fraser's mission was, and made it appear to be one precisely opposite. We appeal to the entire body of executive officers in the North-West, that what we affirm is true, and that what Sir George Couper says is not so. We ask these gentlemen pointedly—Did Colonel Fraser approach you on this tour, to warn you that the Lieutenant-Governor foresaw that 'widespread famine' was coming upon the provinces, and to settle with you beforehand how you were to meet it? Or did he come to you, with assurances that all fear of calamity was over, and to urge you to close your relief-works, and to show great caution in again opening them, should any lingering distress show

itself after the *rubbee* sowings were over? When penning his untruthful defence, Sir George Couper did not know that his private instructions to Colonel Fraser would appear in our columns.

Colonel Fraser opened his deputation tour at Bareilly on the 19th October, a fortnight after the great rainfall, and he visited in turn Meerut, Agra, Lucknow, Benares, Allahabad, and Jhansi, assembling the local executive officers to meet him at each place. He held the same language at all, opening the proceedings in every case by reading out to the meeting the private instructions, printed in italics.* Now that these happy rains had fallen, he ~~was~~ ordered, he told them, to "discourage relief-works *in every possible way*." The last of these meetings was at Jhansi, 12th November. 'Mere distress,' he told the officers, there was, not to be considered "a sufficient reason for opening a relief-work." Mere distress, even when the people ~~were~~ *were* without work, was not to be a sufficient reason. They were to shut their ears to tales of mere distress, and their eyes to the fact that the people were 'without work.' They were to re-open the works only when they had "*satisfied*" themselves—again mark the expression *satisfied* themselves—that the people would actually die if they did not open them. And when they did open the works, the wages were to be fixed "at the lowest subsistence rate;" and finally, after all this, and with "a lowest subsistence rate of wages," "task-work was to be *rigorously* exacted."

And to-day, when we are standing face to face with the horrible mortality which these instructions have produced, Mr. Knight is scandalously to blame for charging Sir George Couper with the guilt of it,—Sir George Couper who did all that he could do to save the people alive!

But the reader will naturally wish to know whether Colonel Fraser's instructions met with no remonstrances. He must remember that the evidence as to that is not in *our* hands, but in Sir George Couper's. We are assured that strong remonstrances were addressed to him on the subject, and we are fortunately able to say positively that some remonstrances were certainly made. The immediate procedure at Bareilly—one of the chief centres of the

dreadful mortality that followed—was the adoption of the following resolution in Colonel Fraser's presence :—

"The opinion of the meeting is, that until the real position of the people be clearly known—which it cannot be for another month or six weeks—it will be best to *close the works now in hand*, reserving, however, the projects enumerated in the appendix, to meet immediate needs."

At the same meeting, Colonel Fraser directed that "all rates on existing works should be immediately reduced * * * * so as to give bare subsistence." Now we make an appeal in our turn, to the Collector of Bareilly to tell us what the results of this meeting and these instructions were. We care nothing about Mr. Knight's reputation in the matter. If the Government of India would really deal honestly with the public, let the Collector of Bareilly be invited to tell us what ensued. *We say that the people of Bareilly were dying of hunger at this very time*, or immediately after, and with these facts before us, and these dreadful mortality returns in our hands, it is to insult public intelligence to acquit Sir George Couper and condemn Mr. Knight. Passing to Budaon, we say that the Collector of Budaon (Mr. Sandys) strongly urged the Commissioner not to close the works. The Collector of Bijnour (Mr. Colvin) pointed out that "the pressure would probably continue until the middle of April." He showed that crowds of the people were still on the works, and added :—

"There is nothing here to attract labour. It is a bare subsistence wage, and that people will come and work for it, shows that the continuance of the works is necessary. Wages—1 anna per man, 3 pice per woman, 1 pice per child."

Let the reader remember these rates—one anna per man. Sir George says they were one-and-a-half. And with these facts on his own records, Sir George Couper dares tell the world that Mr. Knight has misrepresented matters. The Collector of Shahjehanpore (Mr. Duthoit) remonstrated to the same effect, and wrote :—

"There is, I am afraid, no room for hope that relief-works will cease to be necessary in this district. On the contrary, I look for a large increase in the numbers upon them by the end of another three weeks."

The Collector of Moradabad wrote to the same purpose, so that all five Collectors in the Rohilkhund division distinctly warned Sir George Couper in October, that to close the works would be to deliver the people over to death. The pretence that the people would not come to the works, if true at all, was true only after they had been driven therefrom by rigorous task-work on starvation wages, the

lowest subsistence wage'; and Colonel Fraser undertook this tour for the very purpose of driving the people from the works. Thus we find him at Meerut, minutely concerning Alighur:—

"The Collector asks for much more relief-work than the Commissioner deems necessary. The Executive Engineer will proceed at once to that district, and see that *the rates are reduced to the bare sustenance wages.*"

In consequence of this visitation tour, we find the Commissioner at Meerut ruling that relief-works on which ordinary rates of wages are paid, *are to be stopped*, and that the people are not to be taken on the works, except at wages "*far below the ordinary rates.*" And yet it is a slander to say that the people were deliberately forced off the works! At Agra (25th October) it was resolved, Colonel Fraser being present, "to stop all works now in hand, but to resume a certain number of them on sustenance wages and task-work, if distress came." We repeat that this sustenance wage at Agra in January, was 12 ounces of flour and 2 ounces of dhal per day, and as this is one of the facts which Mr. McMinn most properly communicated to us, we appeal to him to corroborate it. At Lucknow, we find Colonel Fraser again urging upon the assembled officers, that "mere distress was not to be considered a reason for opening relief-works," and that His Honor had directed that "no relief-works should be started unless *absolutely* necessary to prevent starvation." At Fyzabad, on the 1st of November, we find him urging in the same way upon the assembled officers, that "the Lieutenant-Governor had decided that where works are commenced, they must be carried out on a system of sustenance wages, calculated on certain tasks, which must be *rigorously exacted.*" At Benares, on the 3rd November, we find him holding very peculiar language on the subject. Let the reader note it carefully:—

"With the view of saving the Government excess expenditure hereafter, all works in the budget, except those of a very emergent character, should be postponed until late in the season, when it could be better determined whether to take them up as relief-works, or not, *i.e.*, by paying the labourers *only sustenance wages and by rigorously exacting task-work.*"

In other words, although the works were sanctioned and provided for in the regular budget of the year, at ordinary wages rates, advantage was to be taken of the extremity of the poor to defer the execution, until they could force the people to execute them on starvation allowances, under a rigorous exaction of task-work. And yet the people were

not starved off the works! Nothing was to be done; and even the sanctioned public works of the Budget were to be postponed to make quite sure that we did not do too much. The passage that follows is too striking to be omitted:—

“When the necessity for departing from the above rule of postponing the works should arise, it should be the duty of the Collector first to satisfy His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, through the Commissioner of Division, in the General Department, that the people in the neighbourhood of the work were in such a state of distress and starvation, as to render the undertaking of such work *absolutely* necessary. When Government is satisfied on this point, the Public Works Department to be informed, and the work to be carried out under such instructions as the head of that department shall issue. Two objects will be attained by these proposals: First, Government money will not be expended at a time when its expenditure is not absolutely necessary for the relief of the people. Secondly, the works, if undertaken, will be carried out under such rigorous supervision as to exact a full tale of work for the money expended.”

Let the public read this passage once more. When the Collector has *satisfied* himself that the people around him are in such a state of distress and starvation as to be dying, he may then apply to the Commissioner, who will then apply to the Lieutenant-Governor, who will then apply to the Public Works Department, which will then instruct its subordinates to begin the works! And all this time the people are dying. While the application, which is to *satisfy* everybody, is slowly grinding its way through the official mill, the people solve the difficulty by perversely dying, or throwing themselves into the nearest pond or well. And what a grievous wrong we have done Sir George Couper, by blaming *him* for their perversity! In their perversity they would *not* work, and in their perversity they *would* die, and how could Sir George Couper help it?

At Allahabad, on the 6th November, the Bareilly minutes were adopted bodily, and Colonel Fraser records that “any works carried out there, will be so on sustenance wages, if at all.” And finally at Kalpi, on the 12th November, we read:—

“On the construction of the Saugor road, the average rate of wage up to 31st October had proved to be about one anna one pie per head. Major Thompson having said that he thought it would be in accordance with the wishes of Government that this work should at present be treated entirely as a relief-work, the usual orders about sustenance wages will at once issue, and the work will most probably stop.”

Was conduct so dastardly, so cruel, ever shown by a civilised Government before? An ordinary public work, budgetted for and sanctioned, and being executed at the low rate of wage of 1 anna 1 pie per day, is taken out of

the category of such works and called a relief-work, that the poor miserable men labouring thereon may have their wages reduced to bare subsistence rates, for the very purpose of driving them away from it. In other words, the extremity of the class without work, was made a pretext for reducing the wages of the whole unfortunate labouring class to bare sustenance rates under rigorous task-work. And we have calumniated and slandered the Government that has acted thus!

Sir George Couper tells us, that his rate of wage on relief-works was the ample rate of one and a half anna. How then is it on official record by Mr. Colvin at Bijnour, that ~~his~~ rates were—

1 anna per man.
3 pice per woman.
1 pice per child.

How is it that it is on official record, that Major Thompson's rates on the Saugor road were 1 anna 1 pie per day, and that this rate was reduced after Colonel Fraser's visit to Kalpi? How is it that the rates at Agra were the infamous rates we are assured they were? Can a woman really live upon 3 pice per day! Can a man, on bare subsistence wage, and under rigorous task-work, feed the child that cannot work, and yet is dependent upon him? Were the veil really lifted upon the sufferings that millions of the poor went through during December, January and February, in the North-West Provinces, under these orders, it would strike us all dumb with grief. Of what use is it, to point out that a fraction of the starving people *did* hold on to the so-called relief-works on bare subsistence rates under rigorous task-work? The many felt it less hard to die with their wives and children around them in their villages, than that the poor bread-winner should leave the hut for a distant relief-work, where amidst crowds as wretched as himself, huddled together without shelter in the bitter nights of the winter, and without even a blanket to cover them, he could get bare subsistence for himself. Had Sir George Couper's arrangements been marked by any real humanity, had relief-works on the proper scale been opened, and had the people been properly fed thereon instead of being starved, they would have flocked gratefully to the works in this famine, as they have done in every preceding one. Does it really need Mr. Bernard's

theory of 'an unaccountable phenomenon' to explain why the people would not go to the works? They would not go, because it was blank misery and despair to go, and so they stayed away and died. When Mr. Knight arrived at Agra (11th February) the condition of the people was simply frightful. Dr. Cornish's letter on the subject reached him that very day, and will be fresh in the reader's mind. At that time the talk of the station was that Mr. McMinn was in disgrace, for having opened a small relief-work at Ferozabad, on his own responsibility, and at his own cost, when on arriving at the village, he found dead bodies lying in the street, and the people starving. A week later Mr. Knight himself saw on the Futtehpoore-Sikri road, and again on the Dholepore road, the most dreadful spectacles of poor famine-stricken creatures reduced to skeletons, sitting apathetically by the road-side, or lying down to die. The moment that proper relief-works and poor-houses were opened, the people crowded into Agra in thousands. The 'unaccountable phenomenon' of the people refusing to work was, to our own knowledge, not present at Agra, and would have been seen nowhere but for the inhumanity of the system that had been followed under Sir George Couper's orders. So shocked and distressed was Mr. McMinn by what he saw, when he went out into the district to take his usual turn of work there, that he committed the unheard-of irregularity of writing direct to Sir George Couper, describing to him the dreadful state of the people, in terms that were most unpleasant. He wrote at the same time to his Collector and to the Commissioner. This was about the 8th of January, if we remember rightly. He at the same time did what every humane man would have done—opened a relief-work at his own cost, leaving the Government to adopt it or not, as it pleased. The answer he received was a heavy censure for having dared to address his Honor at all, strong reflections upon the exaggerated tone of his statements, and an order to close his relief-work instantly, and to come into Agra forthwith, as not fit to be in the district at all. The fact simply was that, as a humane and impulsive man, he was horrified at what he saw, and stepping out of the grooves of official routine to try to save the people, he was told that it was far better they should die, than that administrative rules should be broken in this unheard-of way. And so his

relief-work was shut up, and he came back into Agra in disgrace, for having tried to awaken Sir George Couper to the true state of matters. *He was right to the letter. The people were dying in crowds.* When Mr. Knight arrived in Agra, the subject was the talk of the whole station; indeed nothing else was talked about; and we say firmly that there was but one opinion that Mr. McMinn was substantially right, and that the way in which the authorities were shutting their eyes to the condition of the people was an infamy. Mr. McMinn did not seek us out. A stranger to the district, Dr. Cornish, thoroughly familiar with famine symptoms, had seen at a glance the condition of the people, though he was only 24 hours in Agra, and had left his now famous letter at the station, for Mr. Knight's arrival. They had arranged to meet there, but Mr. Knight's arrival was delayed. This was a full month, be it remembered, after Mr. McMinn's irregular and scandalous proceeding in opening a relief-work at his own expense, and trying to awaken Sir George Couper to the real condition of things. On the 15th of February, Mr. Knight wrote his first letter to this journal. He tried hard to write without emotion, but with enough point to rouse the attention of the Government. The letter appeared in the *Statesman* on 19th February; and Sir George Couper now, at last, and after four months of cruel inaction, or the more cruel action we have described, addressed a letter (Lucknow, 26th February) to the Government of India, plainly intended to be a reply to Mr. Knight's statements. It was now discovered, for the first time, that those Christmas rains that were to do away with all anxiety whatever, were not an unmixed blessing, as "they deprived the labouring classes of the work they would otherwise have obtained in irrigating the crops." Now this really means that the Christmas rains, instead of relieving the distressed classes, only aggravated their misery, but it was Mr. McMinn, if we are not very much mistaken, from whom the Government learned this simple fact. But we quote this letter of 26th February, for another purpose altogether. From the 23rd of November to the 26th February are three full months, and it was during these three months that this truly horrible mortality occurred. Is it not almost inconceivable then, that in this letter of 26th February Sir George Couper, in replying to Mr. Knight's statement that...

the people were perishing of starvation, could write as follows :—

“The cold acting on frames already enfeebled by insufficient nourishment has undoubtedly produced a mortality considerably in excess of the usual rate at the present season of the year, although it may be questioned whether it will not be found hereafter that the comparative immunity from cholera and fever which, owing apparently to the drought, the provinces have enjoyed during the past year, will not compensate for the losses caused by insufficient food and clothing, and make the mortality generally *little, if at all, higher than in an ordinary year.*”

The ruler who could pen such a paragraph as this, after witnessing the terrible mortality that had marked the preceding four months of November, December, January, and February, is really ‘unspeakable.’ Sir George Couper can never have looked at the figures, or if he looked at them, cannot possibly have understood them. He incidentally corroborates our statement that the season was a healthy season, and yet the horrible mortality in Rohilkhund, Agra, Oudh, and elsewhere, did not alarm him in the very least. He does not even see what the figures mean. He foresaw no danger in November, when the people were already dying in crowds; he could see no famine in January, when the dead bodies of the people were lying in the public roads with no one to bury them; and at the end of February, when the famine is finishing its work, he is in total unconsciousness that it has been there, and has swept hundreds of thousands of the unhappy people away.

Sir George Couper says, “I have had to contend with a very heavy visitation, but I have had the guidance and advice of Colonel Fraser, my Chief Engineer, whose public work and experience in these matters is as well known to the Government of India, as are his humanity and kindness of heart to a wide circle of private friends.” If it is the fact that Sir George Couper acted throughout under the guidance and advice of Colonel Fraser, we must then, in so far as the inadequacy of the relief-wage is concerned, blame Colonel Fraser heavily in common with himself. It is of course impossible for us to say to whom Sir George Couper trusted for advice and guidance, but it is easy we think to discern the fatal error which the advice embodied. The error is so obvious and so vital that if ever made again, the man who shall make it will deserve to be hanged.

If when the Government opens a relief-work, it fixes

the wage at the lowest subsistence rate, any attempt to exact task-work in return, must plainly end in reducing the wage *below* subsistence rates. Obvious as this is when once clearly stated, we suspect that it was entirely lost sight of, in these disastrous proceedings. If we begin by fixing the daily pay at the bare subsistence of $1\frac{1}{2}$ anna, or any other amount, it is obvious that to exact task-work in return, means that only such labourers as have executed the task will get paid the full rate, while that rate is "the lowest subsistence rate!" We begin by laying down that a man cannot be maintained in ordinary strength, upon a lower wage than $1\frac{1}{2}$ anna per day; and then, by a system of task-work, make it problematic how much he will be able to earn of that rate. If he fulfils the complete task allotted to him, he will get the lowest rations on which a labouring man can be kept in ordinary health. If he falls short of the task, he at once starves under a system like this. Obvious as this reflection is, it does not seem to have occurred either to Sir George Couper or his advisers. Now we suspect shrewdly that the discrepancies between our statements as to the rate of wages and Sir George Couper's arise in this very way. *His* are the hypothetical wages; *ours* the real ones. Crowds of the men and women who came to the relief-works were too enfeebled to fulfil the task exacted for the full rate of daily wage; and as that rate is 'the lowest subsistence rate,' they slowly starved the whole time they worked, through earning less than the subsistence rate. Is it not most discouraging—is it not incredible—that after all our experience of famine, we, as mere newspaper writers, should have to point out these obvious facts? If you are going to exact a full day's work for a full day's wage, you must plainly make that wage something above the lowest subsistence rate. The only reasonable and sound course to follow, is to pay for a full day's wage just the same on the relief-work as on any ordinary public work whatever. The labourer will then work with all his heart and soul, and feel no degradation in his work. He is earning his bread with the sweat of his brow, the only difference being that he is working for the State instead of for a private employer. The rate should never perhaps be below 2 annas per day; the actual pay never less than the lowest subsistence rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ anna. The people are naturally so hard-working and industrious that if they fall short of the full tale of work, you may

be almost certain that physical incapacity is the cause of their failure. You may easily demoralize the labourer, however, by the work you set him upon. He sees well enough, whether he is doing real work of value, or only sham work, to make a show of earning his living. And it is the great reproach against Sir George Couper's administration that, when this calamity came, the district officers were at their wits' end how to employ the people. Mr. Knight himself saw them at Agra apathetically shovelling the earth backwards and forwards, without the slightest interest in what they were doing, because they saw that it was only sham work they were employed upon. There is a great deal of human nature, strange to say, about the poor Indian cooly, though we hardly think it. He is susceptible of self-respect, and of the glow of honest labour, as other men; and if you set him to dig a hole and then fill it up, as a mere pretence for giving him a meal of food, he knows what we are doing, just as well as we do ourselves.

The policy we should adopt, we submit, is as clear as the noon-day. There is not a Famine tract in the country in which great works of public improvement are not urgently required; and matured plans for commencing such schemes at once on emergency, ought to be in every one's hand. When distress comes, these works should be undertaken at once without hesitation, and the labourers paid the full ordinary wage-rate of the district, to secure mainly, honest, self-respecting labour from the people. Fix the task as high as you please, but let it be a reasonable day's work for a fair ordinary day's pay: the lowest pay must be the limit that will keep the labourer in ordinary health and strength, while the patient industry of the people is guarantee enough that the labourer will earn that wage, if his strength enables him to do so. Why should we attempt to construct necessary public works at the cost of the poor? What we have been really doing under Sir George Couper's system, is to exact rigorously a hard day's work—not for a fair day's wage, but for an unfair and oppressive one; and to such lengths have we carried the dishonorable and hateful system, that the poor have lain down in their huts, and died in despair at our inhumanity. Instead of punishing Mr. McMinn for his revolt at such a system, or branding Mr. Knight as a calumniator, we owe them both earnest thanks for what they have done, and we appeal to the public to confirm our judgment.

EXACTION OF THE LAND REVENUE.

We beg our readers, we beg the Famine Commission, we beg the Government of India, and all our contemporaries—to read the letter in our correspondence columns from the Rev. Mr. Scott, missionary at Bareilly, * and to note—without emotion if they can—his story of this terrible calamity. The constraint which he has put upon himself is manifest in every line of it, and yet how terrible it is. Travelling in February, “I saw,” he says, “men lying dead by the wayside; others abandoned to perish; scores were tumbled into old wells, the deaths being too numerous for the miserable relatives to perform the usual funeral rites. Scores of children were emaciated to the last degree. Here was a family of little children, both parents dead: there a widow with three small children. More than one hundred had perished already in this not large village. I applied to the Magistrate * * and the prompt reply was that there could be no departure from the established mode of relief.” Mr. Scott’s story is the more pathetic from the evident desire of the writer to blame the Executive as little as he can. We have more than once pointed out that we shall never know what the real mortality has been. The official returns give no adequate idea of what the death-rate really was; and while some are blaming us for laying this melancholy story bare, others vehemently complain that we are allowing an undue tenderness for the Viceroy and Sir John Strachey, to tone down what we ought to say of the policy that has really been pursued. One correction we feel we ought to make. Sir George Couper has referred to Colonel Fraser’s “well-known humanity” as a guarantee that all was done that could be done; and we were disposed to give prominence to the plea. Within the last few days, however, we have had the most terrible impeachment of this officer’s conduct, sent in to us from districts widely remote from each other. We are assured that we have been imposed upon, and that Colonel Fraser was absolutely fierce in the ex-

* See page 70.

pression of his determination, that "there should be no famine under his administration, and that any Collector who attempted to get one up should ——." We shall not pollute our columns with the language attributed to him ; but if the accounts of this officer's conduct, which have been sent in to us are true—and they come in every case from gentlemen in positions of responsibility—no terms are too strong to characterize his course. If we did not silence our indignation, by the charitable assumption that he did not himself believe in the famine, we should speak of Colonel Fraser in terms that he would never perhaps forget. Both he and the Lieutenant-Governor were absolutely blind to what was around them. Colonel Fraser was "put in sole professional charge of the famine operations" on the 3rd October, and he undoubtedly is largely answerable for what followed.

But we call attention to Mr. Scott's letter, for another purpose. The warnings sent in to Sir George Couper by the District Executive, from about the middle of August, ought all to be laid before the world to enable it to discern the real fatuity of his course in exacting the land *kist* in November. We have *dilettante* readers who wish we would let the subject alone, but it is not to them we feel answerable for our course. A complete change of attitude *must* be made towards these calamities, and the way to ensure it is to carry the conviction of its necessity to all minds. If there was one lesson concerning famine that we supposed had been thoroughly learned, it was the fact that the suspension of the land revenue collections is the one measure of all others that gives most effectual relief to the people. Why, then, were the collections not suspended in the present case? "I may mention," says Mr. Scott, "without enlarging upon it, my firm conviction that the exacting of the usual *kist* greatly enhanced the distress." We have not the smallest doubt that it did so. Now, in spite of the warnings that had been sent in to him for two months previously, as to the critical condition of the people—by Mr. Webster, Mr. Edwards, and others—Sir George Couper addressed his own Board of Revenue on the 10th October, as follows ;—

"Notwithstanding the great deficiency of assets in the present year, His Honor considers that with reference to the character of the settlement, and the urgency of the demands on Government, remission of revenue ought not to be sanctioned, except in very special cases."

On the next day, he wrote to the Government of India as follows :—

"If the village communities who form the great mass of our revenue-payers be pressed now, *they will simply be ruined.*"

Again on the 26th November, he wrote :—

"The Government of India fail to realise the extent of the damage caused by the unparalleled failure of the rains that has marked this year. * * The rain did not come until 6th October, by which time the greater part of the crops was irretrievably ruined."

"If the State demand on the zemindars is not suspended, the Collectors can neither claim nor expect any relaxation of the demand for rent : if pressure is put on the former to pay up, they in turn must and will put the screw on their tenants. All through the dark months of August and September, the zemindars were urged by district officers to deal leniently with their tenants, and aid them by all the means in their power. Many nobly responded to the call, and it would be rather inconsistent to subject them now to a pressure, which may compel them to deal harshly with their tenants."

* It is clear from these representations, that pressure had been placed upon Sir George Couper by the Government of India, to prevent any suspension of the regular collections. The Government of India was under great financial pressure at the time, as the reader will remember who recalls the fact that it was at this very time, that the Finance Department negotiated those strange 6 or 7 per cent. loans in the native bazaars, that were so much talked about at the time. But Sir George Couper was the responsible ruler of the North-West, and what are we to say of a Governor who after making the above remonstrances, could write as follows :—

"His Honor trusts that the realisations will equal the expectations of the Government of India ; but if they are disappointed, His Excellency in Council may rest assured that it will not be for want of effort or inclination to put the necessary pressure on those who are liable for the demand."

It would be ungenerous to lay stress on the unhappy words we have italicized in this extract, but Sir George Couper's best friends must wish they had never been used. As a fact, the collections were going on at this very time (26th Nov.) and were continued vigorously up to the middle of January. In spite of the warnings addressed to him by his own district officers ; in spite of his own knowledge that the zemindars had behaved so well towards their tenants, that it would be most improper to put any State pressure upon them ; in spite of the fact that he knew that the failure of the harvest had been unparalleled ; and in spite of his own conviction, that "the great mass of our revenue-payers would be simply ruined,"

if pressure was made,—he nevertheless applied that pressure steadily up to the very middle of January, and succeeded, we believe, in getting in the bulk of the State demand. But the people died. We could and would make excuses, both for Sir George Couper and the Government of India, but that our earnest purpose is to point the lesson—that the land revenue cannot be exacted at such periods without imminent danger to the people. Long before Mr. Scott sent us this letter, we had learned that the exaction of the November *kist* with the arrears of the June *kist*, had greatly aggravated the distress of the people. Mr. Scott says, “it greatly enhanced the distress.” It was sure to do so. Sir George Couper knew that it would do so, and yet did it! And in May, we are holding an inquest on the dead!

THE ACTUAL EXPENDITURE.

As the controversy progressed, we became very desirous to find out the extent of Sir George Couper's expenditure upon the famine, during the terrible months from November to March last, for a very obvious reason. Everything we were assured had been done by him, that could be done. He was alive to the danger we were told, foresaw it all, and made all the provision he possibly could make to meet it. Well, a very palpable and obvious test of his exertions, plainly would be his expenditure upon the relief of the people. We did not like to write to the Secretariat at Allahabad for an account of it, for although such information ought of course to be communicated to the public freely, it jarred upon us to ask Sir George's own Secretariat, for information to be used against his administration. And so while very desirous to know what it was, we refrained from the attempt to ascertain it. The *Pioneer*—a journal published at Allahabad and very unfavorably known throughout the country, for the way in which it systematically excuses administrative errors, made an effort to weaken our charges against Sir George Couper; but inadvertently, and by inadvertence only, completed the case against him, by disclosing what his expenditure really was. The disclosure it made gave the final *coup de grace* to his administration. It turns out then, that the total expenditure of this humane and vigorous administration upon the relief of the people, during the six months that this famine was desolating the provinces, was just 6½ lakhs or about £57,000. The journal thus supplied, the one fact we had been waiting for, to complete the case. The writer adduced it as a proof that adequate action was taken, that "6½ lakhs of rupees had been laid out upon relief-work, up to the end of March." The case was now complete.

With millions of the poor, starving in a bitter North-West winter, and with 42 millions of people all more or less in distress, and without a poor law of any kind to meet their misery, the full amount of the provision made for their relief, was some £50,000 to £60,000. The

disclosure would have stricken us dumb, but that it was necessary to impress the fact upon the public mind. We knew well that the expenditure had been very small, and that our statement that Sir George Couper had done nothing for the people, was true, but we were *not* prepared for a disclosure of this order. It was idle after this to speak of 'relief' at all. The simple fact—there was none. How are we to make the reader understand what the figures mean? It may help him perhaps, to show him that in England, with its comparatively small population of 20 millions, the rates for the relief of the poor have never fallen short during ~~the~~ years of five, six, or seven millions sterling a year—the last year for which we have any information was 1869, when the State expenditure, upon direct relief of the poor, was £7,700,000. This vast expenditure is the provision made in the parishes of the kingdom, that no poor person actually starves. The workhouses are open to the aged and infirm and the very young, and a weekly allowance of bread and money made to the destitute poor, all the year round. If a death from actual starvation is ever reported in England, we know with what horror and indignation it is commented upon. No excuse is admitted, but the blame of it is searched to the bottom. And with the people found dead in the streets by the cart-load, night after night as at Lucknow, and being tumbled by scores into old wells as at Bareilly, Sir George Couper at the end of it all, and when half a million of people had actually died of starvation, pointed to his expenditure of £60,000, as a proof of the humane vigour with which he attempted to relieve their sufferings!

There are no poor laws in India, for providing for the sick and aged poor, and for men out of employ. The people take the care of the poor entirely upon themselves, and look to Government for assistance, only when the extremity of famine comes upon them. This honourable readiness of the people themselves to sustain their poor in ordinary seasons, gives them a peculiar claim upon the assistance of the Government, when a failure of harvests makes it no longer possible for them to do without it. And now look for a moment, at what our course has really been. The Government is the great landlord of the North-West, taking about 65 per cent. of the gross rental, as its share of the produce of the people's industry.

What the gross annual value of the harvests in the North-West really is, has been much disputed. We had an interesting controversy some years ago with Mr. C. A. F. then secretary to the North-West Government, on this point, and that gentleman estimated the value of the State member rightly, at £24,000,000 sterling. My own estimate was a very much higher one. I should assume the money value of the harvests in the North-West year to be £24,000,000 to £30,000,000, and that a very good deal below the amount. Now the Government's round figures, £6,000,000. In other words, the State share of the gross produce is about one-sixth. It consists of the *khurreef* or rain harvest, and the *rubbee* harvest. What their respective values are, I cannot tell, but it is to the *khurreef* harvest in November that the State looks mainly, we believe, for the payment of its revenue. The *rubbee kists* are collected in May and June, and those for the *khurreef* in November and December. Now there was no *khurreef* this last year, the rains having totally failed. The people had lost their harvest altogether, while there was the Government demand for its share hanging over them for, we suppose, £3,000,000 sterling, to be paid by them anyhow they could. And instead of remitting the demand, because the people had no harvest from which to pay it, or at all events suspending the collection of it, the inexorable claim was made, and the State share of £3,000,000 wrung from the people in their misery! Regardless of the known distress, regardless of the fact that a mass of the population would have to depend upon charity for their maintenance, and that in Sir George Couper's own words we should "ruin the mass of the revenue payers" by exacting our share from them when there was no harvest to share—the cast iron machinery of the State went right on and over the people, crushing the £3,000,000 out of them, and refusing to give them the slightest assistance to keep their poor alive. We took our £3,000,000 share without remorse, and then left the people to deal with the millions of the destitute poor, as they could. Now that we know what Sir George Couper's so-called "relief" was—namely £60,000 in six months—we know all. We want no further revelation. More horrible cruelty was never shown under civilized rule. There were no poor-houses, no poor rates, no fund whatever to save the people. Sir George was determined

there should be no famine; and so after instructing every district officer to shut his ears and close his eyes to the cries of the people left to perish—he went to Allahabad, and there with the utmost composure, while the people died by hundreds of thousands. He never woke up to Mr. Knight's letter of 15th February in the morning, which put him out of his guilty course. He then went on, and for the first time, to see what was going on. If we tell him at the end of March, screwed the compulsory contributions of the £60,000 of his total

the last year from these provinces as the State share year. The Government since the terrible famine of 1837, not £1,000,000 to £200,000,000 sterling, and when the Government who have produced it all, can produce no more, though the unkindly Earth refusing it to their blood—we could positively spare but £60,000 of the last £3,000,000 we wrung from them, to save them from the cruel death of hunger. The taking these last £3,000,000 was the crime of multitudinous murder—and the blood of these poor creatures shall not remain in our skirts, at all events. The one fact we were waiting for, was furnished; and the case stands forth in an awful completeness of outline, that we never even ourselves supposed it could attain.

Sir George Couper's minute was a tissue of untruths, such as never before drawn up, we think, by a man in responsible position. He began by declaring that he sent Colonel Fraser in October last, to warn the District Executive of what was coming, and to make every preparation for it. It was really sent, as we have shown from his own instructions, to tell them that there was no longer any danger of famine; to compel them to close the existing relief-works instantly; and to make them understand clearly that any attempt to 'get up' a famine, would be dealt with in a way they would not forget. The district officers were positively threatened by Colonel Fraser, in language that we cannot quote in these pages. And Sir George Couper then dared to represent to the Supreme Government, that Colonel Fraser's mission was the result of his foresight, and of a humane resolve to save the people alive? He went on to declare that, in spite of an ample relief-wage, the people *would* not come to the works; and told the Government that it was most 'unaccount-

able; the fact being that there were no relief-works at all in most places, and that where there were any, the people were deliberately driven from them, by rates that were an infamy, that were but half or two-thirds the rates he said they were, and were being acted upon at the very time he was writing his defence. He took no notice of the charge, that where such 'works' were opened, the people were exposed in the cold and bitter nights of the North-West winter, without shelter of any kind over them, or even coolly blankets to wrap them in. He said nothing about his exaction of the land *kist*. We have shown that he himself warned the Government of India, that to exact it, would "*simply ruin the mass of the revenue-payers,*" and that the zemindars had shown a noble example to the State of forbearance with their rent claims. And yet he proceeded straightway to exact the *kist*, and went on doing so up to the middle of January. He succeeded, we believe, in wringing the bulk of the revenue from the people, though he knew he was "simply ruining" them; and has so thrown masses of them into the hands of the money-lender from whom they will now never escape.

Our advices from the North-West were telling us at this very time—May—that the wages on the Lucknow relief-works were then :—

Bildars	...	...	...	...	1½ anna.
Common laborers	...	...	...	...	1
Children	...	...	...	...	½

These wages are one anna lower all round than the rates when food is at ordinary prices. At Sitapur the rates were a little higher :—

Bildars	...	...	...	...	1½ anna.
Common laborers	...	...	...	...	1¼ "
Women	...	...	...	...	1 "
Children	...	...	...	...	¾ "

The rates were being changed, at the time our correspondent wrote, by making payment partly in grain, with a view to make the remuneration a little higher. But the above were the rates at which the people were being paid, both at Lucknow and Sitapur in February on to May, with wheat at 10 seers the rupee at the former place, and 9¼ seers at the latter, the people never getting full measure from the dealers even at these rates. Sir George Couper had told the Government of India that he had taken great care to fix the wage at a rate that would give the people sufficient though 'bare' subsistence; and that as the current prices of wheat and dhall had been 11, 12, and even 13 seers per rupee throughout, he had made the wage 1½ anna per day: and he added—

"I hope that if I have erred on the side of liberality, I shall not want

the forgiveness of H. E. the Viceroy in Council; but be H. E.'s decision what it may, I think I have demonstrated that whatever the causes which deterred the people from coming to the works may have been, insufficiency of food was not one of them."

He said nothing about "rigorous task work" being exacted in return for his $1\frac{1}{2}$ anna rate; but at the very time he was thus writing, and up till even May, the rates were but one-half or two-thirds of the $1\frac{1}{2}$ wage, with food indefinitely dearer than he told the Government it was. He says:—"I decided at the outset that the labourer could not live on less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ anna per day, because the rupee would purchase but 11 to 13 seers of food-gain." His actual rate had been but one-half to two-thirds of what he said it was, while the rupee has purchased no more than 9 to 10 seers of short measure.

With food at 9 seers the rupee, and the relief wage of the masses (the cooly) at 1 anna per day under "rigorous task work," it is clear that the people have been deliberately starved off the works, wherever they have really left them. But they did *not* leave them, even at these rates. When the works were opened at Muttra so late as May, the people poured in, in such crowds, upon the engineers, that they had to fly, the starving multitude being desperate. Wherever the rate was even 1 anna, the people stayed by the works though slowly starving; when it went down to $\frac{3}{4}$ anna, they went back in despair to their huts to die. But there were no relief-works at all, at numberless places. At Lucknow, there were none till the middle of February, after four months of desperate suffering, and after nine dead bodies a night had been picked up in the streets every morning for a whole month. The $\frac{3}{4}$ anna rate, with food at 9 seers the rupee, was absolute starvation. There are 64 pice in the rupee, and 9 seers are equal to 144 chittacks. Then—

Pice.	Chittacks.	Pice.	Chittacks.*
64	: 144	3	= $6\frac{2}{3}$

Thus if every pice of the actual subsistence rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ annas were spent upon grain, it would buy no more for the miserable creatures than $6\frac{2}{3}$ chittacks of food, while Sir George Couper assured the Government that he had carefully framed his rate so as to enable the laborer to obtain double that quantity of twelve chittacks of grain, beside salt and firewood.

An attempt was made (*Pioneer*) to show that to have provided blankets for the people would have cost Rs. 10,000,000. It is a proportion only of the people who have not bundles of rags to wrap themselves in, while £100,000 only would have given every poor creature what was wanted. At Agra this provision was made in February at trifling cost, and the attempt to show that our demands upon the State were extravagant, are thoroughly dishonest. The sum we have named (£100,000) would more than have met the wants of the poor miserable creatures, who it is admitted (*Pioneer*) had in some cases no shelter whatever. Let the English reader imagine what it means. No shelter over head, with the thermometer at 32° freezing point, and without even a Rs. 2 cooly blanket to cover them. England must call the Indian Government strongly to account for its reactionary attitude on this subject, from the extravagant and unprincipled conduct of Sir Richard Temple, who made our expenditure a by-word in 1874.

The condition to which the miserable people of the Agra, Rohilkund, and Lucknow divisions have been reduced, by the starvation process to which they have been subjected, seems to be perfectly frightful. The people con-

*. A chittack is 2 ounces : an anna is $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.

tinue to die like rotten sheep. The returns for March and April are as follow :—

		1878.	1877.
<i>Rohilkund</i> ...	{ March	37,884	
	{ April	37,033	9,076
<i>Agra</i> ...	{ March	19,081	
	{ April	19,802	8,105
<i>Lucknow</i> ...	{ March	13,885	
	{ April	15,327	5,825
<i>Roy Bareilly</i> ...	{ March	11,371	
	{ April	14,472	5,028

Taking the provinces as a whole, the returns are—

	April 1878.	April 1877.
<i>N.-W. Provinces</i> ...	157,326	78,408

And this is what comes of grinding the land revenue out of the people, when there is no harvest to pay it from. The people starve *en masse*, and get into a condition from which there is no rescuing them. When standing in the poor-house at Agra in February, with 2,000 poor wretches crowding into it, Dr. Tyler said to us—"They are too far gone now to do anything for them: more than half of them will be dead in less than six weeks." This is the outcome, we say, of setting the State machine over the people, to grind the land revenue out of them, when there is nothing to pay it with: and of the "please discourage relief, works in every possible way," policy.

THE disclosure that the total amount spent upon the relief of the people in the North-West, from September to the end of March last, was but 6½ lakhs (£50,000 to £60,000), furnished so absolute a corroboration of our charges against Sir George Couper, that we felt it to be needless for us to go on. The *Pioneer* did not tell us *when* this money was spent, but even this miserable mockery of the people's need was not forthcoming—*before* after Mr. Knight's letter had appeared in February. In establishing our charge against Sir George Couper's administration we have been under the heavy disadvantage of a prosecutor, whose evidence consists mainly of the admissions made by the other side. Sir George Couper shall himself tell us *when* this outlay was made. If the reader will turn to his defence he will see that Appendix A gives us the number of people upon the relief-works, and in the poor-houses from September to end of March, for but one district only, Agra. Now we may be very sure that Sir George has selected the district which speaks most favourably for him; and what do we find even here?

Daily average of relief, September 1877 to March 1878.

	Relief-works.	Poor-house.
September	2,250	325
October	5,500	325
November	4,400	285
December	4,400	200
January	2,800	450
February	22,000	900
March	20,000	1,300

The figures speak for themselves, and show clearly that even the miserable $6\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs, for which Sir George would take credit, was nearly all spent after public attention had been called to the truly horrible condition of the people. The *Pioneer* of course knew this well enough, but was honest enough to conceal it. If we assume that one-half of this relief ($3\frac{1}{4}$ lakhs), was spread over the first five months of the period, and the remaining $3\frac{1}{4}$ lakhs spent in February and March, we shall make a sufficiently close approximation to the facts. So it comes out finally that the foresight, vigour, and humanity shown by Sir George Couper and his Lieutenant, found their full expression in an expenditure of about Rs. 2,000 a day, spread over a distressed population of 42 millions of people, an indefinite proportion of whom were suffering the horrors of a bitter famine.

$$\text{Rs. } 325,000 \div 150 = \text{Rs. } 2,100 \text{ Per day.}$$

There is the fact. It is to trifle with the public intelligence to speak of Sir George Couper's defence to our charges. There is no defence. It stands out with lightning clearness, that the people were left to perish, in accordance with the instructions carried by Colonel Fraser to the head-quarters of the various divisions in October.

And now for the other terrible connection with this course. We have seen that Sir George Couper himself wrote to the Supreme Government so late as November that any attempt to exact the land revenue from the people would "simply ruin the mass of revenue-payers." He told that Government that it plainly did not realize the fact that the *khurreef* had absolutely perished; that there was no harvest from which the people could pay it, and that the zemindars had acted so nobly in suspending the collection of their rents, that it would be a reflection upon the State if it did not show the same forbearance. And, though writing thus, he went

straight on to the exaction of the *kists*, just as though the people *had* reaped a harvest. The exaction went on from November to the middle of January all over the Provinces, the vast sum of £3,000,000 sterling or more having to be wrenched from the people.

The exaction spread over sixty days means Rs. 500,000 per day. See now what British rule really is. Under native rule the demand would have been remitted altogether, because there was no harvest to meet it. With our eyes wide open to the fact that the exaction would simply ruin them, the State machine moves on cruel destiny, crushing Rs. 500,000 per day out of the miserable people, for sixty long days together, and showing our "humanity" by allotting Rs. 2,000 per day for their relief, under rigorous task work. We demand solemnly and with passionate earnestness—Has the world ever seen a rule like this before?

And then we wonder that the people prefer native rule to our own; and we appoint Famine Commissions to find out how it is that the people die in millions, when they lose their harvest. Without a poor law, without machinery of any kind for the relief of the people, we proceed calmly with our 'administration' of the country, and wonder that it does not succeed. Now that the veil is lifted by the merest accident, we see a brilliant *Vice-Royal* Court gaily dancing, banquetting, legislating and 'administering' in Calcutta; a poor, apathetic, sleeping creature whom we call Lieutenant-Governor doing his dancing, pirouetting and 'administering' at Allahabad, and the great State machinery of cast iron, going rolling and crushing on over the people as though they were cane in a sugar mill, and leaving ghastly heaps of the crushed dead behind it, WITHOUT ANY ONE EVEN KNOWING IT till a journalist "seeking notoriety" and going that way, complains that the atmosphere is faint and heavy, and that he fears there is something wrong.

We tell the Government plainly that knowing, as it well knows, that nothing gives the people such relief in famine as the suspension of the land revenue, our exaction of it in these North-West Provinces, when we knew what its effect would be—has made us guilty of the blood of the poor, heart-broken, crushed, despairing people, who laid down and died as our State Juggernaut rolled over them, to the distant music of their banquetting and pirouetting.

